

THE
REST
HOUSE

BY
ISABEL
C.
CLARKE

THE REST HOUSE

Novels by Isabel C. Clarke

Each \$1.35 net. Postage, 10 cents extra

FINE CLAY

"A fine novel, worthy of a place alongside of Mgr. Benson's and Canon Sheehan's."—*Messenger of the Sacred Heart.*

BY THE BLUE RIVER

"Its gripping power is substantial. It is truly a throbbing story of heart interest."—*The Tablet.*

THE SECRET CITADEL

"Fragrant with the same mystical element that stamped 'By the Blue River' as a work of art."—*Catholic Transcript.*

PRISONERS' YEARS

"Not only masterly, but in a certain way masterful"—*America.*

ONLY ANNE

"The story has a haunting beauty comparable only to that of Lucas Malet's 'The Far Horizon.'"—*The Republic.*

THE REST HOUSE

BY

ISABEL C. CLARKE



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PUBLISHERS OF BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

1917

THE REST HOUSE

LEASING CHARGE

COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY BENZIGER BROTHERS



BENZIGER BROTHERS

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Chapter I	7
Chapter II	22
Chapter III	39
Chapter IV	55
Chapter V	66
Chapter VI	77
Chapter VII	88
Chapter VIII	99
Chapter IX	126
Chapter X	139
Chapter XI	148
Chapter XII	175
Chapter XIII	183
Chapter XIV	199
Chapter XV	216
Chapter XVI	226
Chapter XVII	242
Chapter XVIII	253
Chapter XIX	262
Chapter XX	276
Chapter XXI	292

	PAGE
Chapter XXII	298
Chapter XXIII	312
Chapter XXIV	323
Chapter XXV	343
Chapter XXVI	358
Chapter XXVII	378

THE REST HOUSE

CHAPTER I

IT WAS snowing hard, and the wind blew against their faces, stinging them as if it were hurling little sharp arrow-heads of ice against them—diminutive weapons that yet managed to add considerably to the unpleasantness of their present lot, in the opinion of these two people arrested in their journey by the sudden plunge of the car into a deep snowdrift.

Peggy Metcalfe stood shivering in the road; her teeth were chattering, and her hands and feet were becoming every moment more and more numb. She watched with mechanical attention the prostrate form of her brother Peter, who was “doing things” to the car, here in this lonely and rather wild part of North Somersetshire.

All around them the field spread white, frozen, and cheerless. Beyond the fields the hills stood up snow-covered against a leaden gray sky. Here and there deep blots of brown stained the white—disclosing woods that were as yet unburied beneath the snowy pall. It was extraordinarily silent, with the peculiar and muffled quiet which invariably follows a heavy snowfall; and in the silence Peggy, who was impressionable, discerned a touch of that hostility which Nature seems to betray when she finds human beings

suddenly at her mercy, as if she wished to take the opportunity of showing them that despite all their endeavors to tame, train, and civilize her, she yet remains uncrowned sovereign of them all, cruelly powerful, serenely indifferent, pursuing her royal, relentless course without pity or compunction.

Those who live in close contact with her, who habitually submit rather than struggle and who have neither the means nor the ability to combat her, are less afraid of Nature in her wild moods; just as those who are grimly accustomed to the storm, the whirlwind, the earthquake, acknowledge her superior power and bow before it.

But Peggy was softly nurtured. She was accustomed to surroundings that were extremely comfortable and luxurious, and where efforts were always being made to increase that comfort and luxury. If the temperature at Mildon Park fell below a certain point, Nature was not blamed, but some one who was responsible for the central heating was very soundly rebuked. Such misfortunes were, however, extremely rare, for the domestic wheels at Sir John Metcalfe's great Surrey residence were well oiled, and, as like consorts with like in this world, Peggy had small knowledge of human habitations where lesser standards of comfort prevailed.

Just now, in spite of the cold and a vague anxiety that occasionally rose in her mind in spite of all efforts to repress it, she was enjoying herself thoroughly. She even lifted her face, which was unveiled, to the sky, heedless of the sting of half-frozen snow and the buffeting of the

bleak gale. It made her feel so extraordinarily alive, and though she shivered and her face smarted as if it had been skinned, these physical discomforts in no way diminished her joy in the sense of unusual freedom. She was going to show Nature that she was not afraid of those silent, lonely, hostile fields! Even if they had indeed been peopled with invisible malevolent presences bent on destroying herself and Peter (and this dreadful thought had once or twice fantastically occurred to her mind), she would still have lifted a brave, smiling, little face to the sky.

It was such a small, slight face, so delicately modeled in all its lines, that only the very perfection of its contour saved it from triviality. You might have passed Peggy by, but if you had paused to look at her you would certainly have looked a second and third time. Her dark brown hair was soft as a cloud and she wore it very simply dressed; her eyes were brown, too, and a shade or two darker than the hair and rather thickly fringed with lashes that lent them depth and softness, as dark lashes always do; her complexion was of that white colorlessness which sometimes accompanies dark hair. In her own family Peggy was not considered at all beautiful, perhaps because she had been regarded as a plain child, and this adverse opinion had clung to her. Peter was the only one who thought differently, but then he had always been—as the Metcalfes said—“silly about Peggy.”

After a considerable interval Peter emerged from beneath the car. He stood up, shook himself somewhat after the manner of a big dog, so

that the snow fell in little heaps from his coat, and looked at Peggy.

"Can't you start her?" said Peggy.

"No. I think you'd better get in, and I'll go and look for help. Don't stand there in the snow any longer, Pegs!"

There was a note of anxiety in Peter's voice as he advanced these suggestions. The daylight was fast dying, and only a pale, narrow, saffron-hued bar broke in the west that uniform gray sky which had the thick opaque look appropriate to a severe snowstorm that has not yet done its worst.

"I'd rather come with you," said Peggy with decision. "It'll be quite safe to leave the car. If she won't move for you, she won't move for any one. And if some one came and tried to steal her I couldn't stop him."

This irrefutable logic did not appear all at once to convince Peter Metcalfe. He was getting a little anxious about his sister.

"But, Pegs, dear, your feet must be simply soaking," he said.

Peggy had always ruled Peter ever since she was a mite of five years old and he had been a school-boy of nine. They had formed even then a kind of alliance, offensive and defensive, against the two superior elder sisters, Diana and Beatrice. Vivian, the younger son, who preferred peace, alternately lent the weight of his person to each opposing camp. He had a sneaking wish to support Peggy coupled with a jealous hostility evoked by the superior prowess of Peter; these conflicting emotions made his championship unreliable, nevertheless he leaned greatly to the

winning side as represented by Diana and Beatrice. Beatrice would have been a waverer, too, but the hand of Diana pressed heavily, and though she loved Peter, she looked upon Peggy as a baby, and a very naughty and rebellious baby to boot. To side with a person who by nature is always getting into scrapes and meriting and receiving punishment from the Olympians almost always means that you become involved in both scraps and consequences; it is safer, therefore, to associate yourself with the person who represents morality and order. It had seemed all the more extraordinary that in those youthful days Peter, who in age came between Beatrice and Vivian, should have so consistently supported Peggy through thick and thin, suffering heroically at times the pains and penalties consequent upon this ill-advised championship.

The ties thus formed held still, and the closest and most intimate friendship existed between Peter and Peggy Metcalfe.

"Never mind about me," said Peggy cheerfully, "I love this kind of thing. It is such a delicious change! Where do you think we are now, Peter?"

Peter looked at his watch and then opened a map. Peggy held one end of it and they stood side by side, examining it together.

"It is about an hour and a half since we left Chippenham," he said. "Of course we ought to have stuck to the Reading road instead of trying this silly short-cut. That last village must have been Marshfield. I wish we'd started in the

morning instead of waiting till after luncheon. I *knew* it was going to snow." He glanced ruefully at the sky, which held but one promise, that of more snow and yet more snow. Even in those few minutes his cap and the broad shoulders of his coat were thickly encrusted, while Peggy's slender, gracile form, enveloped in a heavy wrap, was becoming every moment whiter and whiter.

"Let's walk on anyhow," she said cheerfully, "and see if we can see any signs of human habitation."

She spoke carelessly, for she could perceive that Peter was growing increasingly anxious. Besides, they were only wasting time in idle discussion, and darkness would soon be upon them.

"We shall have to send a telegram and say we can't get home to-night," she said as they trudged up the hill. As she spoke, a picture of that fine old Georgian house rose with a certain seductiveness before her mental vision. Already the blinds would be drawn down so that her mother might not be disagreeably reminded of the inclement conditions that prevailed outside. Electric light, masses of flowers, a huge, blazing fire of logs would create that artificial impression of warmth and light so conducive to physical comfort. The newest books from Mudie's, the latest illustrated papers and reviews would lie on a table within comfortable reach of Lady Metcalfe's armchair. But at that moment Peggy would not have exchanged the chill bleak wildness of the Somersetshire hills for the serene environment of Milton. She liked the rough wind, the blizzard, the cold, the forlorn discomfort of it all.

They walked in silence up the hill, leaving the motor securely ensconced in a snowdrift under the hedge. It looked a curiously derelict and abandoned object in its stolid immovability.

On reaching the top of the hill the prospect held nothing of hope. Bleak white hills, wide white frozen fields, brown willows that possibly indicated the course of a canal, met their vision. There was no sign of any village, no sign even of farm or house. The whole world had an inhospitable, uninhabited aspect.

"I don't believe that was Marshfield," said Peggy irrelevantly.

"Of course it was Marshfield," Peter maintained stoutly.

After that they were silent again, for it really did not help them particularly to know whether they had passed through Marshfield half an hour ago or not. What did matter very much was the fact that they were not now approaching Mildon, where they would certainly be expected not later than tea-time. Properly speaking, Peggy had no business to be here at all; she should have returned home by train with her maid. Even Beatrice—who was now Lady Charsley—had counseled this course, which was so obviously appropriate. Peter and Peggy had been spending a week with her at Lavender—that famous Gloucestershire seat of the Charsleys. Peter, whose motor was a very recent acquisition, had always intended to travel home in it, but it was not until the eleventh hour that Peggy had prevailed upon him to let her accompany him. She pleaded the dullness of the cold cross-country

journey, the frequent changes, the long wait at Oxford. It would be much quicker to go in the car, and much more fun! Peter feared the disapproval of the Olympians, for he had no chauffeur with him, and was regarded as both reckless and inexperienced. Beatrice always faithfully represented the Olympian point of view, and her arguments were all in favor of Peggy's traveling by train. Now Peter, who had allowed himself to be overruled—as usual—by Peggy, recognized when it was too late the inherent wisdom of those stern infallibles.

They walked on rather aimlessly, and came at last to an open, rather dilapidated five-barred gate, hanging loose upon its hinges. Probably a rough road led thence across the fields hidden beneath that pall of snow. There was a clump of trees at an inconsiderable distance from the gate, standing upon a slight eminence, that might possibly conceal a farmhouse or perhaps a cottage. But Peter was reluctant to leave the highroad. Another car might possibly pass, and tow his own off in its wake. He wondered why he had never thought of this contingency before.

"It's just a chance," said Peggy, after they had surveyed the place for a moment; "we may as well try." She plunged forward into the deep snow that came nearly to her knees.

A shrill and sustained barking emerged from the clump of trees. As they drew nearer the sound increased to a passionate and even hostile protest. Substantial shadows as of buildings darkened the space between the clustered stems. Then a light gleamed palely, like a solitary star.

"It is a house," said Peggy briskly.

Peter was now in a thoroughly pessimistic mood. The ire of the Olympians loomed large before his mental vision. It would be a bad beginning to the Christmas holidays. Sir John had the disagreeable but not uncommon habit of reverting to any past manifestation of stupidity, incompetency, or frailty on the part of his offspring whenever his wrath was aroused. This episode would furnish him with material to embitter their interviews for months to come!

"And if it is a house," said Peter gloomily, "I don't see what use it can possibly be to us."

"Why, you said you would try to find help," Peggy reminded him, "and I am very hungry. I hope it will mean tea and perhaps cake. And a fire and some dry clothes. And a man to go with you and help you to get the car out of the snow. And then it will be so nice to know exactly where we are!"

"I am sure it will mean nothing of the sort," said Peter. "Such a house as that—if it is a house at all, which I very much doubt—can only be inhabited by some cross-grained old curmudgeon who hates the sight of his fellow-creatures, and will probably take us for tramps or thieves and slam the door in our faces."

"Dear Peter," said Peggy, and she linked her arm in her brother's, "I don't really see why——"

She did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the owner of the bark, a small dark Scotch terrier, ran out toward them uttering those sustained and infuriated canine menaces so characteristic of his kind.

Peggy spoke to him reassuringly, as if he were a personal friend, which appeared to mollify or at least subdue the original ferocity of his intentions, for he ran back toward the house barking as if to announce rather than to repel their approach. In a few minutes they came to a second gate leading to a small winding path guarded by twin rows of conifers and evergreen shrubs now heavily burdened with snow. Beyond, on a slight eminence, sheltered by a few taller trees, there stood a square, solid house built of Bath stone and darkened with age. There were lights in some of the windows. Peter, encouraged by something homely and sheltering in its aspect, went forward boldly, and going up to the front door, rang the bell. The dog had by this time disappeared to the back regions.

"We do look like tramps," said Peggy, smiling at her brother.

A maid servant opened the door, disclosing a square, sparsely furnished hall. It had a shabby aspect, and the linoleum that covered the floor was so worn that no pattern was visible.

"Oh, can we come in, please?" said Peggy; "we've lost our way, and we've left the motor in a snowdrift at the bottom of the hill!"

The maid smiled broadly: she was a young, shy, country girl,

"Please come in, Miss," she said, "and I'll go and call Miss Mary."

She shut the door, and leaving them standing in the hall, vanished. Peter and Peggy stared at each other in the lamplight. The warmer atmosphere—though even here it was not very warm—

melted the snow upon their clothes, and the drips fell thickly upon the floor.

"We shall make an awful mess of the place," said Peter, stamping his feet in a vain endeavor to restore their circulation.

"I wonder who Miss Mary is," whispered Peggy.

"The farmer's daughter, probably," said Peter.

They had not waited very long when the door at the end of the hall was once more opened and a girl entered. She did not look very much older than Peggy, and she was dressed sensibly if a trifle shabbily in a short blue serge skirt, a flannel blouse, and a dark blue knitted coat. She had red hair and very pale blue eyes and a charming smile that set Peggy at once at her ease, and indeed reassured both the wayfarers. Peter began to apologize for the intrusion, but Miss Mary only said pleasantly:

"I can send the gardener to help you with the car—the other men went home early on account of the snow. He could take one of the farm horses if that would be any use. I wish Frederick were back—he would know exactly what to do!"

"Oh, but that'll do simply splendidly," said Peter; "thank you very much. And if you could kindly lend my sister some dry clothes."

"Oh, I'll look after your sister," said Miss Mary, smiling at Peggy, "and I'll have a room ready for you too by the time you return. We've lots of spare room here, luckily. You mustn't dream of going on anywhere to-night. Why, it's eight miles to Coldford, our nearest town, and

five to Hintlecombe, our nearest station, and you might stick in another drift."

"Oh, we couldn't possibly dream of trespassing upon you like that," said Peggy, her eyes shining.

"We shall be only too delighted. We so seldom have visitors here. We are quite alone—my father, my brother and I. You will tell me your names?"

"I'm Peter Metcalfe," said Peter, "and this is my sister Peggy. We're on our way to Mildon in Surrey, where our home is."

Miss Mary rang the bell; the little maid reappeared and listened attentively to the brief orders that were given. It was quite evident that Miss Mary, if not actually an Olympian, held a position of undoubted authority. Nor was she a person to be "rattled" by an emergency even when it was represented by the arrival of two wet, half-frozen strangers. There was something calm and competent about her.

After a very short delay Peter, accompanied by a man and a horse and armed with a lantern and some tools and a rope, disappeared once more into the snow. When they had gone Miss Mary conducted Peggy upstairs to her own room. As they left the hall and turned down a passage, a whiff of an unfamiliar odor assailed Peggy's nostrils. She wondered a little idly what it could be. It was pungent and aromatic, but not scented, and it penetrated up the stairs, almost like a thin smoke.

"It's warmer in my room, as there's a fire," said Miss Mary. "I think you had better take off all

your things and wear some of mine. They are sure to be too big for you, but that won't matter. I'll bring you some hot water."

Peggy stooped down and began to take off her boots, a matter of some difficulty as they were stiff with moisture and her feet were cold and swollen. Miss Mary, meanwhile, opened in turn drawers and cupboards remarkable for their admirable and meticulous neatness, and produced various garments which she laid upon the bed. A white silk blouse most carefully guarded between sheets of silver paper represented Miss Mary's most precious and cherished "best," but she now offered it to Peggy without a qualm. A skirt of gray cashmere scarcely less precious than the blouse was laid on the bed by its side.

"Do you think they will do?" she asked, for something in the simple elegance of Peggy's attire as she flung off her heavy fur coat made her feel suddenly humble about these, the only garments she was able to offer.

"Oh, they're far too good for me," said Peggy, her eyes shining; "how awfully kind of you. I don't know how to thank you. I was just getting the least bit nervous with the darkness coming on and our both getting colder every minute. And we never hoped to find any one as kind and thoughtful as you have been!"

Miss Mary colored a little at the praise. She was accustomed to much self-denial, to much tender consideration of others, and those others being a father and a brother, though both sincerely devoted to her, were inclined to take her

unselfishness rather for granted. The praise and the thanks were novelties to her.

"I'm so glad you found your way here, Miss Metcalfe," she said. "I will go away now and see about a room for your brother when he comes back. I hope you will take a little rest when you have put on these dry things."

She moved toward the door and before leaving the room she said rather hesitatingly:

"You shall have some tea in about five minutes. It is only half past four now, and Benediction is at half past six—if you would like to come."

Peggy looked at her in frank surprise.

"Benediction?" she said.

"Yes—we are Catholics here," said Miss Mary, "and we have a chapel. Just now we have an invalid priest staying with us, so we have Mass and Benediction every day, which is a great happiness."

She spoke very simply. Peggy said shyly:

"I should like to come. But I've never been to Benediction before and I sha'n't know what to do."

"There's nothing to do," said Miss Mary, smiling. "But unless you feel too tired one generally kneels down all the time after the priest comes in."

She returned once more, bringing a tray with some hot tea and a plate of bread and butter for Peggy. Then she left her alone and hurried away to superintend the preparation of their rooms. And after that there was supper to be thought of, for some addition to their simple little evening

meal was surely necessary, for the entertaining of these two strangers.

But first of all she must go down to the study and tell her father of the unexpected arrival of these guests, and beg him to break the news to Frederick as soon as he returned.

She was not quite sure whether Frederick would be pleased. He was shy and disliked visitors and especially strangers; she hoped he would be polite and not too abrupt in his manner to Peter and Peggy.

CHAPTER II

DRESSED in Mary's clothes, which were decidedly roomy for her, Peggy sat in an arm-chair by the fire and drank her tea, which was stronger than Lady Metcalfe would have deemed desirable for her daughter's nerves—and complexion. She finished the bread and butter and ate, too, the slice of brown home-made cake which Mary had brought for her. Then she leaned back in the chair and suddenly realized how very tired she was, and how delicious it was to be once more sheltered and dry and warm.

An unaccustomed sense of physical well-being and ease came over her. She felt as if she would like to close her eyes and go quietly to sleep. It was the snow, she told herself, that had made her so strangely sleepy.

Peggy closed her eyes. She was conscious now—as far as she could be said to be definitely conscious of anything at all—that with that sense of physical ease there had come to her a serenity that could not be called physical at all. It was as if some cool, quiet spirit of peace had come over her and laid its hands or perhaps its wings upon her heart, her soul.

The room where she was sitting was plain and rather bare. The furniture was of painted deal and the carpet on the floor was almost thread-bare. The little iron bed was covered with a white cotton counterpane. Everything was scrupulously clean and neat, but everything in it betrayed also the poverty of its owner.

As she lay there with her eyes closed and her limbs slackened and inert, she fell into a delicious, restful slumber that was like an anodyne, for it took away all the pain, the intense weariness and fatigue from her body, and bestowed upon her mind a sense of the most perfect tranquillity. As the slumber deepened she began to dream and in her dream she found herself wandering about again in the darkness and cold with Peter by her side. There was a third figure with them—that of a man whose face she could not see, but he was a bigger man than Peter, broader, taller. He walked ahead of them with easy, swinging strides. . . . And then suddenly a door opened and they came into the lamplit hall and found Miss Mary there waiting for them. Peggy heard a voice cry aloud the one word “Come!” It was so loud that it startled her and awakened her from her sleep. She rubbed her eyes and looked round the room. The fire was burning low in the grate, and the room was rather less light in consequence than it had been. She was quite alone.

The sound seemed still to echo in her ears, as if the voice had spoken quite close to her, and she thought for the moment that Miss Mary must have called to her to go down to the chapel. But nothing stirred, and there was no one in the room. The door was still shut.

“I must have dreamed it,” said Peggy to herself. Yet she could not help feeling that the word had been actually uttered, and that it had indeed awakened her. Now in the quiet room it seemed to acquire a certain eerie, almost sinister significance that alarmed her.

The adventures of the day had aroused a curious excitement in Peggy. Nothing of the kind had ever happened to her before, for she had always been most carefully guarded and sheltered, and she had seldom stayed away from home unaccompanied by her mother unless it had been on a visit to one of her married sisters. But Diana and Beatrice were quite as strict and vigilant as Lady Metcalfe, and she was accorded no more liberty when she was with them than she had at home. But the events of the past few hours seemed to have broken abruptly the smooth and even monotony of her life. There had been the long waiting in the snow, the expedition in search of help, the finding of this little lonely stone house set in the bleak hills of Somersetshire, the calm welcome offered by Miss Mary, and now this strange dream! . . . A sudden alarm seized upon Peggy, due, perhaps, to the excited state of her nerves. She was quite alone here, in a strange house among strange people of whom she knew nothing at all. She had heard terrifying stories of travelers being lured to lonely dwellings and murdered there by just such apparently kind and pleasant women as Miss Mary!

Oh, why had she allowed Peter to leave her? Why had she not insisted upon accompanying him? The echoes of that voice which had awakened her had died away, leaving only a profound silence. In her sudden terror Peggy ran to the door and flung it open.

It was a relief to see Miss Mary's figure coming down the passage toward her room. Her

head was covered with a small black lace mantilla.

"I was just coming to see if you would really care to come down for Benediction," she said in her tranquil, steady voice.

She looked at Peggy and wondered if she had a touch of fever. Her face, that before had been so pale, was flushed, and her eyes were shining strangely. The girl looked overwrought and excited.

"I am ready, thank you," said Peggy. "I should like to come."

Even if she had not felt this eager curiosity to be present at Benediction she would have accompanied her hostess to the chapel rather than return alone to that silent room, to a possible repetition of that strange dream.

She felt reassured by Miss Mary's simple and kind tone, and felt ashamed of her unworthy and uncharitable thoughts, and of those fears which had left her with trembling limbs and throbbing pulses.

Miss Mary led the way downstairs and along a passage dimly lighted by a small oil lamp. It was a long passage that must have run the whole width of the house. The dark oak floor was uneven, and it was uncovered by any carpet; this part of the house seemed older than the rest, Peggy thought, and its poverty was dignified by age. Quite at the far end was a door concealed by a dark red curtain. Miss Mary paused, opened a drawer, and taking out a black lace veil, handed it to Peggy.

"Shall I put it on for you?" she asked.

"Please," said Peggy. She turned and faced her hostess, who arranged the veil on her head with light, skilful fingers. The black frame was becoming to Peggy's small, slight face.

Then Miss Mary dipped her hand into a little silver stoup that hung on the wall near the door, made the sign of the cross, and opening the door, ushered Peggy into a small chapel. It was rather dark, and at first Peggy could discern nothing but the red lamp which glimmered ruby-like before the tabernacle. The air was heavy with the perfume of spent incense, and Peggy realized now that this was the odor which had accosted her nostrils in the house and which had been the first thing to mystify and perplex her. Miss Mary with a slight gesture indicated a *prie-dieu*, and Peggy knelt upon it and bent her head. She saw that Miss Mary genuflected before the altar, and then disappeared through another door, from which she presently emerged again bearing a lighted taper, with which she lit the candles upon the altar.

As Peggy's eyes became more accustomed to the obscurity she perceived that they were not alone, that there were other figures occupying two *prie-dieus* to the left. Now in the pale illumination of those altar-candles she could see that the figures were those of two men, but their faces were averted and she could only distinguish that one of them was old and had hair of silvery whiteness, and that the other was younger and dark. They did not turn to look at her; they were motionless and apparently absorbed. Pres-

ently there was a slight stir and a boy entered followed by a priest wearing a white vestment. Hidden voices sang the *O Salutaris*, and Peggy wondered if those clear, bird-like notes that led the singing belonged to Miss Mary. The *Tantum Ergo* followed. She could hear the words of the Latin prayer uttered clearly by the priest. "*Deus, qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili passionis tuæ memoriam reliquisti; tribue, quæsumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuæ fructum in nobis jugiter sentiamus. Qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.*" . . . Peggy, looking up, saw that the priest was holding a gold monstrance raised high above his head. A bell rang; the two figures bent their heads as if in adoration. Some Latin prayers followed.

What did it all mean? Peggy felt as if she had been present at some mysterious but very holy rite. And she felt, too, an almost passionate desire to understand what had taken place. She seemed to be a child groping in thick darkness, ignorant, unaware. A sudden envy of Miss Mary seized upon her. What was it that this other girl possessed which she, the child of rich parents, brought up to every possible luxury, had never known? Was it something that might satisfy a certain wistfulness of soul which had often made her restless, discontented, dissatisfied? Was there something here that might prove the answer to her formless prayers?

Peggy was still kneeling there when Miss Mary reappeared and with swift dexterity extin-

guished the lights upon the altar. When she had finished she came down the narrow aisle and touched Peggy on the shoulder. She was faintly surprised and not a little pleased to find her still kneeling there in a devout attitude, her face hidden in her hands. But she rose obediently now and slowly followed her young hostess out of the chapel almost like one in a dream.

Peggy was not conscious of having uttered a single prayer, yet she must surely have been praying—well, not exactly praying, perhaps, but communing with some Power, some Presence she could not define.

As she walked out of the chapel she turned and genuflected awkwardly in imitation of Miss Mary, although conscious that the attempt was rather a failure. She suffered Miss Mary to remove her veil and she followed her down the passage back into the hall. And as she did so she flung back her head a little, and there came into her heart that first impulse of proud rebellion, which is perhaps a not very infrequent one when the human heart feels the first arrow of the Divine Assailant, and, ignorant and unprepared, evinces a certain resistance, a plea for liberty . . . The pain that saints have likened to the sharp piercing of a sword in the heart is in itself sufficient to arouse that initial rebellion. What prisoner still able to free himself will not seek to cast away the chain that threatens his liberty? Peggy felt the curious imprisoning sense that sometimes comes to the reluctant, hesitating soul at the first touch of divine grace. And then she remembered inconsequently the cry that had

awakened her—the voice that had called “Come” across her slumber.

As they entered the hall they saw Peter standing there. He still wore his coat, which was thickly encrusted with snow; he seemed to have just come in.

Peggy rushed forward impulsively and cried: “Oh, Peter, darling, I’ve been so frightened.”

She stopped short. In the presence of Miss Mary she could hardly relate those unworthy fears.

Fortunately both her hearers misunderstood her.

“Why, what was there to be frightened at?” said Peter, in a cheery tone. “Did you think I was lost in the snow? We had an awful job to get the car out, I can tell you, but we did it at last and we’ve got her safe and sound in the yard. And I’ve been to the village and sent a wire home, to tell them we are all right but that we can’t be back till to-morrow.”

His words reassured Peggy, who was looking at him in a bewildered way. It hurt her and gave her a sharp sense of disloyalty to remember now that she had never thought of Peter at all during the whole two hours of his absence except just that once to wish that he had not abandoned her. She had felt no anxiety whatever for his safety, and he believed that she had been alarmed on his account.

At that moment the two men she had first seen in the chapel came into the hall. Miss Mary introduced them.

“Father, this is Miss Metcalfe and her brother,

Mr. Metcalfe." She turned smiling to Peggy. "My father, Mr. Morford, and my brother Frederick."

Peggy shook hands rather shyly, first with Mr. Morford, who was younger than she had imagined from that first glimpse of his white head in the chapel, and then with Frederick Morford, who she thought had rather a forbidding aspect. He was tall and extremely dark, with black eyes set under very straight black brows that were a trifle scowling, and a thin, hard mouth that did not smile at all as he greeted her. Yet the face might have been cast from some ancient statue, so sharp and carven in their regular symmetry were its dark lines.

"My daughter has been telling me about your adventures," said Mr. Morford. "I am very glad that you found your way safely here; there isn't another house for quite three miles. I hope Mary has been looking after you properly?"

His smile included his daughter, and seemed to convey a proud confidence that she had not been found wanting in this respect. For Mary's domestic competence was due to long training and constant practice. It would never have occurred to Mr. Morford to refuse to accept the constant sacrifice of Mary any more than it would have occurred to her to refuse to offer that constant sacrifice of her youth, her strength, her time. It was Mary's duty to look after her father and brother, and she accomplished the task as a matter of course. Mrs. Morford had been dead about five years, and after her death Mary had slipped into her place and fulfilled

the tasks bequeathed to her by those delicate dead hands. Mr. Morford and Frederick had their duties just as Mary had hers. The little household was a singularly united one—united in its poverty, in its faith, and perhaps, too, in its resignation. Frederick looked after the farm, and also acted as land-agent to a neighboring squire, Sir Arthur Denby. The work was rather more than enough for one man; it reduced his hours of leisure to a minimum, but he had youth and courage and energy. Mr. Morford's health was failing, but he was still able to do a little literary work for Catholic firms and newspapers. When Mary's household tasks were ended she often typed for a couple of hours for her father. Their united incomes sufficed to keep the little home together.

Peggy did not learn this all at once, but she gathered the general position of things before the evening was over. Supper was at half past seven and was a very simple little meal indeed. There was some hot soup, a cold chicken and salad, and an apple tart with cream. No one drank anything but water, and after supper Mary vanished and returned with some cups of coffee on a tray. At the beginning and end of the repast Mr. Morford said a Latin grace, and he and his son and daughter crossed themselves.

They rose from table and Mr. Morford invited Peter to come and smoke in the study. Rather to her surprise, Frederick Morford did not accompany them, but joined his sister and Peggy in the little morning-room where Mary worked. Peggy soon saw the reason for this, for

Mary's tasks were not yet ended and she had still to help the little servant to clear away the meal and put the things away. Frederick had come with them so that Peggy might not be left alone.

She felt curiously timid and shy in his presence, and his taciturnity increased her own disposition to silence. This world was so unlike her own that she seemed scarcely to speak the same language. No effort of will or of imagination could bring it into line with the sumptuous standards that prevailed at Mildon.

Frederick Morford regarded her for a moment intently and then said abruptly:

"I thought I saw you at Benediction. You were there, were you not?"

"Yes," said Peggy, and then she added with an almost desperate courage, "I didn't understand it at all."

"You'd never been before?" said Frederick. She had the feeling that he was not really interested, that he was bored at having to talk to her and entertain her until his sister had finished her work, and that he was simply making conversation.

"Never," she answered; "I suppose you will think it very strange of me, but it was the first time I had ever been inside a Catholic Church."

"I do not think it at all strange," said Frederick Morford slowly; "you are not a Catholic—why should you go?"

Peggy's eyes were fixed upon the ground as if she were examining intently the old-fashioned, faded garlands of roses that decorated the worn

carpet. This man knew the explanation of those mysterious things which she had heard and seen that evening and which had puzzled and confused her. He knew all that she wished to know. Had he found those answers, those explanations, sufficient?

With a great effort she said:

"I—I liked it." Her tone was low and troubled and held an appeal that was not lost upon Frederick. "It has made me wish to go again. To learn—" She stopped short, afraid that she had said too much. And it would be impossible to go on and tell this stranger those intimate thoughts and aspirations that had been hers to-night.

"I'm very glad to hear you say that," he said in a tone of cold politeness. "So many people are impossibly prejudiced. And no wonder, considering all the things they are taught to believe about us—against us!"

Something in his tone, although it was so little encouraging, made it easier for her to speak.

"And yet my first wish was to get up and run away—to forget—to set myself free."

Frederick's face became suddenly serious. He looked at Peggy with black, scowling eyes.

"Free?" he repeated, with an almost violent emphasis.

"Yes, free. As though there was something there that wished to hold me—to imprison me. Haven't you ever felt that? Or perhaps there is no need for you to feel it because you may have always been a Catholic!"

"Yes, I have always been one," said Frederick

Morford slowly. "But although I have always been one, I think I understand what you mean. It binds one—it holds one. You are free yet you are always fettered. Because you are a Catholic you must obey and submit."

There was an indescribable harshness in his tone as he said these words. He was not even sure yet whether Peggy was interrogating him from sheer idle curiosity or whether she was only showing the sympathetic interest of the polite and conventional visitor. He did not wish to talk to her of intimate spiritual things, because he was uncertain of the motive which prompted her to question him, and also because of that British reticence which forbids a man to speak easily and naturally of things that are dear to his heart.

Frederick Morford had had all the advantages, perhaps, too, some of the temporal disadvantages, of a strictly Catholic training. His mother had been a very pious woman and Frederick had adored her. She had loved him very tenderly, and there had been an almost passionate sympathy between them. He had been sent as a boy to Catholic schools where priests had continued the training he had received at home. At nineteen he had obtained the very reluctant consent of his parents to enter the army. They had not wished for that life for their only son; they feared that contact with the world at such an early age would diminish and impair the fine flame of faith that burned in his heart. But he had overruled their objections and had subsequently obtained a commission in an Irish regiment,

where many of his men were Catholics. He was twenty-three years old when his mother fell ill with that fatal ailment which a year later caused her death. The expenses of that illness were very great and Mr. Morford had to strain every nerve to meet them. Finally, he was compelled to write and tell his son that he could no longer give him the slender allowance with which he was accustomed to supplement his pay. He urged him to retire from the army and come and live at home and look after the farm until he had found some more remunerative employment.

Frederick fought a hard battle with himself after the arrival of his father's letter. His profession was very dear to him; he was attached alike to his men and to his brother officers; he had just received promotion. To give it all up was a sacrifice which he felt was too heavy to be borne. But the thought of his mother conquered. He returned home, and never a single word of remonstrance or complaint was allowed to pass his lips. When Sir Arthur Denby, who had taken a fancy to the dark, taciturn young man, offered him the post of land-agent to his property, Frederick accepted it at once. The year that followed was one of sharp discipline for Frederick and Mary, but it made them turn to practical account their early training. They had to forego all the natural pleasures of youth. There was no leisure for Frederick, and there were no pretty frocks nor amusements for Mary. She had to occupy herself ceaselessly with nursing her mother and the performance of hard, distasteful household tasks. But she realized that

her brother's sacrifice had been far greater than her own; he had laid aside ambition, worldly success, the prospect of future advancement.

Six years had passed since the fatal decision had been made, and in those years Frederick had buried deep the passionate ambition of his youth. He had longed for fame and success; duty had held him in the grip of a commonplace routine that admitted of neither leisure, nor recreation, nor study.

But he could not speak of those things to Peggy. The memory of them could still stab him with the smart of an ancient wound.

Peggy had risen now and was standing in front of him with flushed cheeks and eager, shining eyes.

"Oh, please—*please* tell me," she was saying; "I know nothing at all—I don't even know what it is you believe! I have not even been taught to be—as you said just now—prejudiced. But won't you even tell me what there was in the chapel to-night to make me feel so different—so frightened—and yet so happy? Happy but not with an ordinary happiness . . ."

Frederick's face hardened, but he motioned her to a chair.

"Will you sit down?" he said. "I am not at all the person to instruct you. I have never instructed any one in my life. If you want to know about these things, you ought to consult a priest."

Peggy sat down obediently, and clasped her hands with a little nervous gesture of supplication and entreaty.

"I shall go home to-morrow," she said, "and perhaps I shall never have another opportunity of asking any one. I am quite certain about one thing—they would never let me talk to a priest. So won't you please tell me—because I may never have the chance to ask any one again?"

"I'll tell you what I can," said Frederick reluctantly.

When he had finished speaking, encouraged, perhaps, by the dark, shining eyes, by her very attitude, unconscious though it was, of hanging upon his very words; flattered, too, by the almost violent attention she had offered, Frederick was satisfied that he must have lifted the veil of Catholic mystery and shown her at least certain fundamental truths. It was like teaching a perfectly ignorant child—like scattering seed on a virgin soil. Frederick's faith was very dear and sacred to him, and he disliked speaking of it with all the intensity of a naturally reticent man. But there had been something about Peggy's appeal that had insensibly touched him. He did not wish to talk to her in this way, but she had simply forced the situation upon him. And as he went on, warming, perhaps, a little to his task and using even a certain eloquence, he was conscious of a change in Peggy herself. Her face had become very pale; her eyes were dark and somber almost as his own. She looked exhausted and spent, like a flower in a storm.

When he had finished speaking she said breathlessly:

"Are you sure that it is true?"

"I am quite sure," said Frederick.

"Do you think that is why I felt so strange—so different—when I was in the chapel?"

"I think you are probably very impressionable—and I have heard of impressionable people being affected in that way the first time they enter a Catholic church, and find themselves in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament."

She stood up, and again he was struck by that look of almost physical weakness in her.

"Please take me back to the chapel," she said.

Frederick rose and led the way down the long passage and back to the door hidden behind the red curtain. Peggy put on the veil that she had worn before and going into the chapel, closed the door softly behind her.

She could hear Frederick's footsteps echoing as he went back along the passage.

CHAPTER III

IT WAS nearly midnight when Mary came down the passage and opened the door of the chapel. All the rest of the little household had long since retired to rest, and she had only waited up to see if Peggy would require any assistance. She rightly divined that the girl was accustomed to the services of a skilful maid, so perfect and dainty was all her apparel.

At the door Mary paused. Peggy was still kneeling there, a rapt and motionless figure. Mary wondered at first if the girl had fallen asleep, so still and unmoving was she.

She stepped forward and laid her hand very softly on her shoulder.

"It is very late, Miss Metcalfe. Don't you think you had better come up to bed? And it is cold for you here."

Peggy lifted her face, and looked at Mary almost as if she did not see her. There was a curious, almost vacant expression in her eyes.

"I came to fetch you," said Mary rather insistently; "I thought you might have forgotten how late it was. You ought to have a good night's rest."

"Please let me stay," said Peggy. "And please don't sit up for me. I shall be quite all right."

"But—my dear—I think you really ought to go to bed," said Mary in a tone of mild remonstrance.

Peggy shook her head.

"There's only to-night," she said; "to-morrow we shall have to go home. You mustn't ask me to come away."

Mary hesitated. Peggy was very young and she looked delicate. She looked, too, as if she were utterly unaccustomed to anything in the shape of physical hardship. Mary was afraid of the consequences for her of a night spent in the chilly atmosphere of the chapel.

But there was something in those words, "You mustn't ask me to come away," that did most forcibly impress her, and made her even stop and ask herself whether she had any right to try to persuade Peggy to leave the chapel and go upstairs to bed. It was impossible to consult any one else at such a late hour about the wisest course to pursue so Mary had to decide for herself. She bent down and said quietly:

"Good-night, Miss Metcalfe. I won't ask you to come away if you prefer to remain. But if you want anything, please come and knock at my door."

"Good-night, and thank you," said Peggy simply.

She was still kneeling there when at half past six on the following morning the priest came in to say Mass. The Morfords and their servant had already assembled in the chapel, but only Mary knew that Peggy had been there all night.

For the first time she was present at the Holy Sacrifice. She felt again something of the perplexity and bewilderment she had experienced at Benediction on the previous night, together

with an irritating sense of ignorance and a forlorn desire to learn. But she was no longer completely ignorant, although she failed to follow any part of the Mass. Frederick had told her certain facts, and above all he had told Who was present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. It was that mystical knowledge and her own immediate, unquestioning acceptance of its truth that had held Peggy so fast a prisoner all through the chilly darkness of the winter night. In her long vigil it seemed to her that this faith had sunk very deeply into her heart, bestowing upon it a wistful desire to know more. Once or twice the physical hardship, the bitter cold, a feeling of sickness and exhaustion had threatened to conquer and make her seek the rest which her tired and exhausted body so imperiously demanded. But some more powerful influence had triumphed and held her, as it were, transfixed—and adoring.

For the first time she realized that those strange dissatisfactions that had pressed upon her heavily from time to time in her home-life were of spiritual origin. All the ease and luxury of that life had contributed to the comfort and well-being of her body, feeding it with delicate food, clothing it in soft and dainty apparel, shielding it from extremes of heat and cold, avoiding for it all fatigue and preventable pain. And through it all she had been conscious of a feeling that was like privation and starvation, not knowing that it was because her own spiritual needs were being suffered to perish and atrophy. There was nothing in the Sunday

church-going to satisfy those needs. The long sermon, the interminable hymns had always been something of a weariness to the flesh in Peggy's eyes. There are always souls educated in Protestantism whose inherited needs seek for the privileges of which they have been deprived. But steeped also in inherited ignorance, they scarcely know what it is they seek, nor what Bread it is for which they hunger.

Peggy knew that whatever the future might hold for her, she had crossed a definite bridge in the journey of the soul during that night spent in the lonely little Somersetshire chapel. In her mind the adventure which had brought her hither seemed to acquire a new and almost violent significance. She felt almost as if she had been seized, arrested, compelled to stay and learn. And most strange of all was the remembrance of that awakening voice which had aroused her and called "Come."

Peggy looked up. Mass was over, and the priest with covered chalice was leaving the chapel.

"Oh, I will come—I will come!" she said as if in answer.

As she uttered the words she felt that she had made a promise that held all the passionate solemnity of a vow. She could not imagine why she had spoken the words aloud, nor why, indeed, she had uttered them at all. It was as if they had been evoked by the very experience through which she had passed, as well as by the offering of those sacred mysteries which she still so imperfectly understood.

Now when Mary came to fetch her with gentle insistence Peggy obeyed without demur. She suffered herself to be led upstairs to the bedroom which had been prepared for her the night before. The bed was untouched, and Peggy's own garments, dried and folded, lay on a chair. Already there was a fire blazing on the hearth. She suddenly realized how dreadfully tired she was; she felt, indeed, almost light-headed from exhaustion. But a new sense of happiness and peace and deep contentment informed her mind. Mary helped her into bed and brought her some toast and hot coffee. And then Peggy fell asleep.

It was still snowing heavily when she awoke and Mary came to urge her to remain in bed until it was time to get up for luncheon, telling her, too, that her brother had decided not to attempt to start on the return journey till later in the day. Peggy was so tired that she was decidedly relieved to hear of this decision, and she slept most of the morning as if to make up for those hours of voluntary vigil. She did not allude to them in speaking to Mary; indeed, she felt a little ashamed of having done such an unconventional and perhaps exaggerated thing. She wondered if Frederick Morford had been told about it, and whether he thought her very foolish and impressionable. What troubled her most of all was the feeling that if the incident came to Peter's ears he would be little likely to understand or sympathize. She was even a little afraid that he might ridicule the whole thing. She hoped they would not mention it to Peter.

Peter was inclined to be bored in his present surroundings, though grateful for the shelter they had afforded him. He had spent most of the morning in the old coach-house and had patched up the car so that it was now in a going condition and very little the worse for its adventure. He had also trudged off through the snow and sent another telegram to the anxious Olympians at Mildon.

Then he came indoors and smoked and read until Peggy appeared just before luncheon time. Secretly he wondered how Frederick Morford, who was only a few years older than himself, could endure life in such dull and desolate surroundings. Newspapers at the best of times came a day late, and to-day they did not come at all, because it was impossible for the postman to make the journey through the snow. No one seemed in the least degree perturbed at this deprivation, and he was obliged to come to the conclusion that the happenings of the outside world were of small importance to the little household. Peter wondered at their apparent contentment. It would have made life easier had they possessed a motor to get about in, but he discovered that Frederick invariably rode, and that if any one were going away and wished to drive to the station, a rough cart to which one of the farm horses was harnessed provided the only available conveyance.

"But as a matter of fact, we hardly ever go away," said Mary. "My father goes to London perhaps once a year, but I have not been there since I was a child. Indeed, I hardly remember

it. Frederick sometimes stays with a friend when he gets a week's holiday, but that isn't very often, poor boy."

There was, indeed, but little money for pleasure-trips and excursions to London or the sea-side. Mary had spent practically all her life in the remote Somersetshire village. She had read a good deal and was well informed, but she was utterly without experience of life. She had none of the distractions that belong to youth, and perhaps scarcely realized their existence sufficiently to desire them. Peggy's clothes, which she had taken down to be dried last night, had filled her with actual amazement. The delicate, filmy garments of daintiest batiste and lace threaded with blue satin ribbons, the silk stockings and silken petticoat, the fine vest of Indian gauze were things outside of all her imagining. That a young girl should possess them filled her with wonder. She realized that Peggy must be the child of very rich parents, and that she had been brought up in circumstances of great luxury. Every detail was so perfect, as if it were the result of the greatest care and attention.

"Are you the only daughter, Miss Metcalfe?" she asked later in the day when she and Peggy were sitting over the fire in the morning-room.

"Oh, no. I have two sisters, but they are both married now," said Peggy. "I am the youngest." She added after a pause, "Diana is Lady Madinard and Beatrice is Lady Charsley. They have been married some years—they were both married on the same day. Diana has two children now and Beatrice has three."

Mary was knitting some woollen socks, for it was an impossibility for her to sit in idleness even when she was entertaining a guest. There was always too much to be done for her to think of leisure. Peggy watched the quick, deft movements of her hands as the steel needles gleamed in the firelight. From them she fell to examining the hands themselves. Mary wore no rings, and her hands were reddened and a little roughened and thickened, too, by hard work. It was the color and texture of them that struck Peggy more than the actual shape and made her suddenly compare them with her own. The next moment she felt ashamed of having done this—almost as ashamed as if Mary had been able to read her thoughts. Peggy's own hands were small and white and fragile-looking and she wore on the right one a diamond ring which she had been given a few weeks before on her twentieth birthday. Her hands were cared for and beautifully manicured; each nail was polished till it resembled a pink shell. But when she looked at Mary's she realized how useless her hands were in comparison. Much of the comfort and care which had surrounded her during the past twenty hours had been due to Mary's initiative and energy. She had done all sorts of little services for Peggy, quite as a matter of course, although at Mildon such things would have been performed exclusively by one of the maids. Peggy saw, too, that Mary was wearing a blouse of dark blue flannel that had evidently been washed many times, for it had shrunk and the wrists were too small. Clothes formed a very important part of

life at Mildon. Peggy had an extremely large allowance for a young girl, although she did not know that it was unusually large. If she were not perfectly tidy, or if she wore anything that was not quite fresh or at all shrunken or shabby, Lady Metcalfe would be certain to make a few appropriate remarks upon her slack ways. Peggy rather disliked the trouble of buying new clothes and she had no feminine love for "shopping." But the blouse she was wearing now was a very pretty one; it was fashioned of thick, creamy, white silk cut open at the throat. The long sleeves ended at the wrists with little white frills that made Peggy's hands look even whiter and smaller than they really were. It was a simple but dainty garment and was one of several she had bought for her visit to Lavender. The skirt she was wearing was of fine dark blue cloth. Mary felt that it must have cost a great deal. While Peggy's clothes were a revelation to her, she felt no envy of them. She was perfectly satisfied with her lot.

"I am afraid you would find life at the Rest House dull if you were to stay here long," she said presently, laying aside her knitting for a moment in order to give the fire a poke.

"The Rest House?" said Peggy; "is that its name?"

"Yes," said Mary; "there's a little story connected with that. My grandfather, who bought it, was once traveling in Ceylon and he fell ill and was taken to the nearest rest-house, as they call the *dâk-bungalows* there. He had only a native servant to look after him, and there was

no doctor within reach. The only European was a Catholic priest, who was also staying there, and who nursed him most devotedly through a dangerous illness. It was owing to him that my grandfather became a Catholic, and he resolved that when he came back to settle in England he would call his home the Rest House. I am glad you like the name," she added thoughtfully. "We like it because it commemorates the circumstances which brought my father's family into the Church. My mother belonged to a family that has always been Catholic."

Peggy could not fail to be struck by the simplicity with which Mary spoke of their religion. It seemed, indeed, a thing so inseparable from their daily lives, impregnating their goings out and their comings in, that it would have been almost impossible not to allude to it.

Presently Peter looked in.

"It's thawing hard," he said, "and I think after all we'd better push off this afternoon. We can get as far as Coldford and take the evening train to town." He spoke in a tone of unusual decision.

Peggy looked a trifle disappointed. She had so hoped to remain one more day—to be present once more at Benediction and Mass. But she felt the impossibility of giving such reasons as these to Peter. She knew, too, that it was for the sake of these people who had been so hospitable that he was determined to go away, for he did not wish to trespass longer upon their kindness.

"Oh, Peter; I am sorry." She glanced regret-

fully at Mary. "But if you really think we had better——"

"I've made inquiries and I hear the road's pretty good between here and Coldford. Anyhow, we'll make a bid for it."

He went out of the room and Mary rose.

"Then you shall have an early tea before you go," she said, and departed to superintend the preparation of that meal. She had not been gone very long before Frederick came in. He had evidently been out, for he still wore his rough riding-clothes and his boots were muddy.

He drew a chair up close to the fire and sat down opposite to Peggy, who felt suddenly constrained and shy in his presence.

"Well," he said almost roughly, "are you very tired?"

The ruddy firelight deepened the flush that overspread Peggy's pale face.

"I'm quite rested now, thank you." But there was something in the little delicate droop of her slight figure that still suggested fatigue and exhaustion. Why, she had not the strength of a mouse!

Frederick felt a wholesome contempt for the very type to which Peggy belonged. A woman who was incapable of doing the simplest womanly tasks—who had certainly never done an hour's honest work in her life!

Perhaps, too, there was a touch of resentment that she should have so much, while Mary, with her heart of gold, her patience, her unwearying unselfishness should have so little.

"What on earth made you do it?" he inquired, and now there was no little animosity in his voice. He felt so convinced that she was merely a spoiled child in search of a new sensation.

His powerful eyes were fixed upon her, and Peggy, meeting them, thought she could read in them both impatience and contempt. They had the mysterious expression which very dark eyes so often have, as of some secret contained in their very shadows. And they were fanatical eyes, too, in a sense, as the eyes of a very devout Catholic—especially one who has made heavy sacrifices—often are. Peggy shrank before that steady, searching, almost fierce gaze.

"Do what?" she said weakly.

"Stay in the chapel all night," said Frederick Morford, "as Mary tells me you did."

"After what you told me I felt that I must," said Peggy simply.

Not one of Peter's friends who came sometimes to stay at Mildon would ever have dared address her thus.

"It was an exaggerated sort of thing to do," declared Morford.

He wanted passionately to probe for her real reason and he did not greatly care whether he hurt her in the process or not.

"Was it?" Her voice faltered over the words, and she clenched her hands together with a nervous effort at self-control.

"Do you generally allow yourself to be so influenced by what strangers say to you?"

Last night he had seemed more kind if a trifle bored by her insistent questioning. Yet he had

given in, and had answered her, though with evident reluctance. But to-day he looked stern and almost scornful, as if he had not approved of her action. Her pride was touched.

"I do not know," she said with a little touch of hauteur. "I see so few strangers and I have never talked to any one on this subject before. And, of course, I have never done anything like this before."

"Will you tell me why you did it?" he asked abruptly.

Peggy looked down at the floor, at the garlands of faded roses on the worn Brussels carpet. She did not speak.

"Will you tell me?" he repeated insistently. "You really must have had some reason for doing anything so—so extraordinary!"

"I wanted to stay there with the Blessed Sacrament," she said at last in a tremulous, nervous voice. (He sincerely hoped that she was not going to cry!) "I was very tired and cold—you mustn't think I didn't feel these things. My body didn't want to stay there after the first little while. I am not accustomed to any hardship. It *was* a hardship. But I found something precious—something I had never dreamed of. I—I couldn't go away. You must not think I was praying—I do not think I said any prayers at all."

So far she seemed perfectly sincere. Indeed, there was something guileless and childlike in the way she made these admissions. They touched Frederick in spite of himself.

"Perhaps you are not aware that there are

nuns in certain convents who take it in turns to watch like that, day and night? They call it Perpetual Adoration."

"I have never heard of them," said Peggy, deeply interested, "but I think they must be very happy," she added after a moment's pause.

"Yes, they are happy," said Frederick; "they have chosen that life of poverty and submission and complete self-denial. It is not an easy life. It entails a crucifixion of the flesh which only the grace of God can make possible."

If only Father Denis had not been too ill to-day to see and speak to Peggy! He was suffering from a violent attack of asthma and could scarcely breathe.

Suddenly Peggy said:

"Before I went down to Benediction, when I was asleep—or nearly asleep—in your sister's room, I was aroused by hearing a voice very close to me calling 'Come.' I am sure I could not have imagined it, for it was so loud that it woke me up completely. At first I thought it was your sister calling. And all night—" she paused.

"Yes? All night?" said Morford, with a touch of impatience.

"All night I felt that I was obeying—answering. I told you that I did not pray, but if I said any words they were these, 'I will come, I will come.'"

If she expected him to administer another cold douche of his contempt upon these fanciful imaginings she was destined now to disappointment. For Frederick Morford rose from his seat and moved restlessly a few paces down the room,

away from her, his face averted. Then he turned and faced her, looking down upon her from his great height. His face was hard, but there was an expression in it that she failed to understand. At last he said in a voice that held something of emotion in spite of its harshness:

"Be true to that promise, Miss Metcalfe! If that is why you were brought here yesterday—for God has a thousand ways of bringing His own into the fold—may His Holy Name be praised! If you ever find it is your duty—quite clearly your duty to God to become a Catholic, I hope you will not hesitate. I hope you will not disobey that first call! I don't know what your position is nor what your circumstances are, but I imagine that your people are rich, that you have all you want of this world's goods. And you may find hindrances in your path. And you *look* so weak!" The old note of disdain was in his voice now. "Some people would do anything rather than forfeit their own soft physical ease!"

His strange words moved her profoundly even while the harshness of his manner repelled and even hurt her. But she looked up with brave, serene eyes that made Morford wonder what kind of pilgrim soul this was that fate had flung so carelessly across his path.

"What does one do to become a Catholic?" she asked simply. "I do not know anything at all. But I feel that in some way I became one last night."

"You have to learn," he answered; "when the time comes—if it ever comes—you must go to some priest for instruction. When he thinks you

are ready he will receive you. There is nothing very difficult if you are in earnest. The difficulties come afterward, when you have to spend the whole of the rest of your life in conformity to the grace you have received, to the dispositions of the Divine Will. You will find there is nothing so trivial in your daily life that religion does not touch it. The most harmless, the most innocent things in themselves may become dangerous to you if they come, even ever so little, between you and the Divine Will of God."

He left the room and presently returned with two little worn and shabby books, which he gave to her. Peggy glanced at the titles. One was the "Imitation," and the other was "The Garden of the Soul."

"Will you keep these and read them?" he said. "I am afraid they are very shabby, but their contents are as good as ever."

"Oh, thank you," said Peggy, flushing. She made a step toward the door. Something seemed to tell her that the interview ought now to be closed. She felt exhausted, as if she had passed through a strenuous hour. "I will go to the chapel now until Peter is ready. Perhaps your sister will fetch me when he is ready to start."

CHAPTER IV

THEY left the Rest House at three o'clock, when the pale wintry sun was dipping westward in that opaque scarlet glow that harmonizes so well with a wintry landscape of snow and ice. The thaw had set in rapidly, and great lumps of snow fell heavily upon the top of the car as they passed under the branches of overhanging trees. There was a feeling of cold and raw dampness in the air.

Peggy sat very silent beside her brother. Mr. Morford and his son and daughter had all assembled on the doorstep to watch their departure. Frederick's face was very stern but his eyes had softened a little as he took Peggy's little grey-gloved hand, and it had seemed to her that because of the secret she had imparted to him he had become like an intimate and understanding friend. To no one else, she felt, could she have revealed herself with that same frankness. Even Peter, who had hitherto always been the recipient of Peggy's simple confidences, could never have been told this particular one. It stood much too aloof and apart from all their mutual experiences. It made her own individuality stand out sharply, isolating her. When she came to consider it as she did now with the rushing of the car humming in her ears, the sense of isolation hurt her, because it seemed to separate her from her beloved Peter. She was jealous of anything that could obtrude between them, destroying their perfect intimacy.

But the sojourn at the Rest House had left Peter perfectly unchanged and untouched; it had not influenced him at all, one way or the other, and he was still unaware of her long vigil. She could not tell him about that. She almost wondered now at her own hardihood in being able—and without too much difficulty—to speak to Frederick Morford about it. He had in a manner compelled her confidence with an authority that seemed to place them in the respective positions of master and pupil. It was like asking advice of a physician and making at the same time a very clear statement of your symptoms in order to help him to diagnose your case. Peggy had tried to be absolutely frank. Of course he had not been very kind—at least, not just at first. That note of scorn and disdain, that contemptuous “*You look so weak!*” had hurt her not a little. But she had felt, nevertheless, that he understood, that to him at least she was not speaking a strange language. Dimly, too, she realized that he had purposely tried by hard words to prove her, to test her sincerity and perhaps her resolution. His contempt had been for herself—that ease-loving, luxurious self he had discerned in her, the Mildon self, in fact, that had never once looked beyond the Mildon standards. But he threw no cold draught of doubt upon the genuineness of her experience, which would certainly have found small credence at Mildon.

Suddenly she stretched out her hand and touched Peter’s impulsively.

“Oh, Peter, I was sorry to come away! I was so happy there!”

The fact at least he must know, and she longed for him to echo the sentiments.

"Happy?" There was no doubt about his astonishment as he looked at her with his gay, whimsical eyes. "Why, Pegs, I was afraid you were being bored to tears, just as I was! I mean they were jolly decent and all that, but there was nothing on earth to do from morning till night! I felt I really couldn't stick it another day, and that's why I made an excuse to push off. That chap Frederick must have a thin time. He told me that he'd spent a few years once in the army, but he had to leave because they couldn't afford to keep him there. Hard luck, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Peggy. "You did like them, didn't you, Peter?" she added almost wistfully.

"Oh, I liked them well enough. Frederick seemed a good sort, though a little bit glum and serious. I'd like to have him down at Mildon, but I'm afraid he wouldn't be allowed."

"Why?" asked Peggy.

"Oh, because he's a Catholic and all that," said Peter.

"I should have liked to ask Mary, too," said Peggy.

"I don't think they'd care to come," said Peter. It was almost as difficult to picture the sister as the brother in those elegant surroundings. "How odd it must be to be a Catholic and go to Catholic schools. Somehow a chap always seems quite different—it changes the outlook. That's why you find they generally keep to their own sort. If ours were a Catholic house neither of the Morfords would feel strange there, although we are

rich and they must be as poor as church mice!"

"How do you know they would feel strange there now, Peter?" she asked.

"Oh, I knew lots of them at Oxford. Not well at all, but quite enough to see how exclusive they were. I suppose it's the hereditary result of the persecutions that makes them keep aloof."

"I have never known any before," said Peggy; "but it seemed to me they had something that made them very happy and contented." She looked earnestly at Peter. "Yet Mary was very shabby, and she worked hard—harder than any of our servants, I am sure. She even helped in the kitchen, and she told me she always made the butter and baked the bread herself."

They arrived at Mildon rather late for dinner. To Peggy's relief there were no guests, and she hurriedly slipped into a white crêpe-de-chine tea-gown and ran down to the drawing-room, where she found Lady Metcalfe alone. She went up to her and kissed her timidly. She felt so changed, and yet she longed to show her mother that she was not changed.

"Well, Peggy," said Lady Metcalfe, "I hope you are none the worse for your escapade. Your father is extremely annoyed with Peter. It was very wrong of him to persuade you to go in the car in such weather. Beatrice should never have allowed it. We must be thankful the accident was no worse and that you were neither of you hurt. I hear you stayed at the most benighted farm imaginable."

"Yes," said Peggy, a little chilled.

She longed to defend Peter, but she could not find courage to take the blame upon herself.

"Farmers, I suppose?" said Lady Metcalfe.

"The son looks after the farm. They are not well off," said Peggy, "but old Mr. Morford is a writer; and there was a girl—a little older than I am."

"I hope it was not very rough?" inquired Lady Metcalfe.

"Oh, no; they did all they could to make us comfortable," said Peggy. "They were very hospitable and kind. And they were Catholics," she added hesitatingly.

"Catholics? How extraordinary!" said Lady Metcalfe.

"They had a chapel; and there was a priest staying there."

"I hope you did not talk to him?" said her mother, severely.

"Oh, no—I never saw him to speak to. He was ill," said Peggy.

"It all sounds charmingly medieval," said Lady Metcalfe, "but I hope they did not try on any of their proselytizing tricks with you, Peggy? Of course the time was short, but Roman Catholics never miss an opportunity if they can help it. It is quite pitiable to think of the homes they have divided and broken up!"

Peggy started and flushed. Her mother's words seemed to color Frederick's words and exhortations with a new and dark significance, imputing to him also an ugly and sinister motive. She felt for a second a violent recoil against Morford, against herself also for her so easy yielding

to his influence, and for being carried away by his words. She seemed now to detect something of unscrupulous power in Frederick Morford, and it brought to her a sense of secret shame that she had proved so ready a victim.

Then she thought of the quiet of the long, long night, the night spent alone with that silent Presence, and the red glimmering lamp that burned like a jewel before the Tabernacle, and suddenly she was aware that this and this alone had really and profoundly influenced her. Frederick had been but the human messenger, the instrument, who had explained those divine mysteries to her. He had done this with obvious reluctance; often his tone had been positively discouraging; his words had been colored, too, with a certain roughness of contempt as if he doubted alike her sincerity and her motives.

"It is quite providential that they live so far off," continued Lady Metcalfe. "There will be no need to take any further notice of them except just a polite note to this Miss Morford, thanking her. You might show it to me before you send it, Peggy."

"We hoped," said Peggy timidly but desperately, "that perhaps we might have asked them here. Not old Mr. Morford, but Mary and her brother——"

"It is quite unnecessary and would be most undesirable," said Lady Metcalfe in that brisk, definite tone she always employed for her authoritative utterances.

"But they were so very kind—so hospitable——" said Peggy.

"That's enough, dear Peggy. It tires me to argue with you. Diana and Beatrice always accepted what I wished so simply and gracefully," said Lady Metcalfe.

It was unwise of Peggy to persist, but persist she did.

"They knew nothing about us, and we looked just like two tramps when we got there. Yet they took us in and gave us food, and lodging, and shelter, and clothes," said Peggy.

"I am sure they were everything that was most kind. I only wish it were possible to do something for them in return."

She began to perceive—for very few things in connection with her five children ever escaped Lady Metcalfe—that Peggy had been attracted by these strangers. She was always impressionable, reflected her mother, and was liable to be impressed, too, by undesirable things, when her long and careful training should have saved her. She must set to work to discover wherein lay this subtle attraction, and proceed forthwith to demolish it.

"Did you go into their chapel, Peggy?" she inquired.

Peggy started and flushed again, and answered "Yes," in a low, timid voice.

Lady Metcalfe reflected almost bitterly that Diana and Beatrice could at any point of their well-conducted careers have safely spent the night at a remote Somersetshire farmhouse inhabited by poverty-stricken Catholics without manifesting any of this subsequent emotion, this starting, this nervous flushing, this timid but ob-

stinate espousal of their cause. But it was useless to try to mould Peggy to a standard to which she was not naturally adapted. Her sisters, full of tact and *savoir faire*, always did and said the right thing as interpreted by the Olympians!

Peggy could not meet her mother's eyes, for she knew that she would probe with determination this line of inquiry, and she wondered how far she would be able to retain her secret.

"To a service?" inquired Lady Metcalfe.

"Yes."

"What service?"

"Benediction—and Mass."

Lady Metcalfe frowned.

"Surely there was no necessity? Surely they were not so ill-bred as to persuade you to go?"

"I went of my own accord. I wished to go. It—it interested me," said Peggy.

"You did not think perhaps it would be utterly against my wishes!" pursued Lady Metcalfe.

"I am afraid I did not think about that," said Peggy, raising her clear brown eyes to Lady Metcalfe's blue ones.

"You never do think of anything but what you wish to do. I never knew any one so unmindful of other people's wishes."

Peggy was silent.

"In future I must forbid anything of the kind. You are not to go into a Roman Catholic church—anywhere. Do you quite understand, Peggy?"

"Yes, mother, I quite understand."

She looked at her mother curiously. Lady

Metcalfe's face was flushed with anger. She could be severe when she chose.

"Are you going to obey me?"

"I can not promise. I—I will try."

Her voice was low and troubled.

"Do you wish me to speak to your father?"

There was a little threat now in Lady Metcalfe's voice, for she was irritated by Peggy's obstinacy. She knew that she was afraid of her father.

"Would he care?"

"Of course he would care. He never employs a Roman Catholic either here or in his office."

Even when Peggy as a little child had shown this obstinate, rebellious spirit Lady Metcalfe had always been aware of something out of her reach—something that could not be touched by sharp, coercive measures—something that as now mutely and almost pathetically defied her. Peggy had been always the troublesome one!

And it was still there, that indefinable "something"—desperately silent and hidden and repressed.

Lady Metcalfe rose briskly from her seat.

"You will think it over and tell me your answer to-morrow, Peggy," she said.

Peggy was silent. She was very pale now, but her eyes were bright, almost defiant. She rose as her mother rose and stood there in a drooping attitude. The first storm had passed over her, and she felt uncertain and insecure. She had not the strength to weather many storms. Aware of this weakness in herself, she could not bring herself to answer her mother. To make that promise involved something of conscience. Those

spiritual needs so suddenly awakened were still passionately pressing their claims to be satisfied. All the time she was thinking to herself, "What shall I do? What ought I to do?" Ought she to obey blindly, implicitly? Peggy dreaded a struggle with her parents; she knew by past experience that she was always the one to emerge conquered and hurt from such an encounter; she dreaded her father's cold ironic anger that lashed like a whip. Why was it so difficult to make a promise which ought to have been so easy? Peggy had a tender conscience and she felt there was something unfilial about her very resistance. But it was strange that even now she felt less fear of her father than of breaking that word of hers, "I will come—I will come."

That night when she went up to bed the influence of the Rest House held her powerfully. Last night at this time she was kneeling in the little chapel, and now she could almost fancy herself kneeling there again, all through the long and cold winter night until the grey dawn stole in through the small leaded panes, telling herself, when she could formulate any ideas at all, that she had found all that she had most unconsciously and blindly sought. She tried to free herself from the remembrance, telling herself that it was a beautiful dream which could never be realized. Could a sojourn of twenty-four hours in a new and unaccustomed environment suffice to change the whole tenor of her life? There had been something vivid and vital and passionate and compelling about it all. She saw again the shabby, poorly furnished rooms, scru-

pulously clean and curiously unlovely, the figures of Mary and Frederick Morford passed before her eyes, but they seemed almost like shadows to her now. The only thing that lived for her to-night was the chapel where she had offered, as it seemed to her now, her whole soul to the worship and service of God.

CHAPTER V

THERE is perhaps no complacency so complete, so indestructible as that displayed by those persons who are at once stout and rich. It would almost seem as if their very *embonpoint* was in itself indicative of the supreme interior satisfaction produced by the knowledge of the immutable stability of their financial prosperity.

Lady Metcalfe was a case in point. She had inherited a large fortune from her American mother, who had joined her innumerable dollars to the pounds sterling (some were unkind enough to allude to them as shekels) of Vincent Lampard of Lampard & Co. When Jane Lampard reached the age of twenty (a time when plumpness and rosiness are at the zenith of their attractions) she had married John Metcalfe, of Metcalfe & Co., Limited (how strictly limited only the members of that admirably conducted firm were really aware). She added her fortune to that of her husband in a marriage settlement which was the product of two highly trained lawyers, who in turn were prompted and abetted by two practical, hard-headed, and experienced business men. It was indeed a legal document which might almost have served as a final expression and model of its kind.

It is not the purpose of this book to relate the rise of the firm of Metcalfe & Co., for, indeed, such a record would prove monotonous from its unvarying character. It would be merely the

history of an unbroken commercial success consequent upon the enterprise, diligence, and prudence of three successive generations. But great as the firm had been under his father and his grandfather, it really only achieved true greatness and distinction when John Metcalfe the Third assumed the reins of its government. He was indeed one of the uncrowned kings of commerce, and possibly, in recognition of this fact, and of his large and even munificent donations to important charities, a baronetcy had been bestowed upon him, although many were of opinion that only a crown and scepter could adequately have rewarded him.

Lady Metcalfe had brought up admirably and so far without much difficulty a family of five children, consisting of two sons and three daughters. She had made but one mistake, for which no one could hold her responsible, and this lay in the sex of her youngest child (who, properly speaking, ought—it was keenly felt—to have been a son instead of a third daughter. One son for the Firm—to carry on that triumphant name—a second for the Army, and a third for the Navy—that would have been the perfect balance, the arrangement which would have been above all criticism. Although the mother was blameless in the matter, she illogically attributed something of blame to the girl herself, and while it was impossible for her to be anything but kind and maternally solicitous, she was in point of fact a shade less affectionately disposed toward Peggy than toward her other children. She had been heard more than once to assert that Peggy

was troublesome, and to say that it was a pity she was so unlike her two elder sisters in character as well as in looks. Peggy was three years younger than Vivian, who came next to her in age. The other four had followed each other rapidly, and it may have been that Lady Metcalfe had imagined she had brought her rôle of maternity to a close in the person of her younger son. That Peggy proved to be a girl was a double offense. She was the crumpled rose-leaf that did occasionally threaten to disturb — though only remotely — the complacency of her mother.

The two elder girls had made brilliant marriages at the respective ages of nineteen and twenty. They were considered beautiful and, indeed, they had inherited from their mother her pink and white complexion, her clear blue eyes and masses of golden hair. Both were tall and graceful. Lady Metcalfe had seen them lead in triumph to the hymeneal altar the eldest sons of two peers, for although the Metcalfes were soundly radical, Sir John would have disdained lesser aspirants for his daughters, and preferred to form new connections among the old nobility.

His eldest son Peter was consecrated (no less solemn term could efficiently describe this relegation) to the Firm from his earliest youth. Years of suggestion, of studious implication, made the sacrifice almost an automatic one when he left Oxford at the age of twenty-three. Not for him the transient glory of the Army, the glamour of the Navy, the subtle attractions of diplomacy with its titles and orders. He could not be spared

to shine thus as a merely decorative adjunct of his country. Metcalfe & Co. claimed the first-born with the dreadful precision of an Egyptian plague, with the relentlessness of a determined Herod.

A year or two's grace had been accorded to him; he was even allowed to remain an extra year at Oxford in order to take his degree—a process which had presented some difficulty to him. Sir John knew the value of a little rope. His son could afford the loss of a year or two before his initiation into the mysteries of the Firm. Peter was well aware that, humanly speaking, there was little chance of his being able to escape ultimately that destiny which should have been so agreeable to him, yet from which he instinctively shrank. At the last he only exhibited a faint restiveness, a protest so slight it could hardly be called rebellion, at the prospect of having to pass the greater part of his days, and consequently of his life, in the huge, hideous, London office. He was horribly conscious that he was not of the stuff of which successful business men are made. (His eldest sister Diana, now Lady Maddinard, was the only one of the five children who could adequately have upheld the family tradition in this respect, and being, unfortunately, a woman, she could only practise her talent in a very limited sphere.) Peter was a handsome, slender, rather delicate-looking youth with grey eyes and brown hair and a vague, dreamy expression. At Oxford he had competed for the Newdigate, and although he missed the coveted prize his work had been greatly com-

mended. This had given Sir John a decided shock, and he preferred that the attempt should have proved unsuccessful. Indeed, he regarded the writing of poetry as a kind of intellectual sowing of wild oats to be checked only if it threatened to become a permanent occupation. He had never been taken that way himself, and he would certainly have nipped in the bud any craving for artistic expression in his own person just as he would have repressed any other undesirable tendency to self-indulgence. But as in the end he intended to demand the supreme sacrifice of Peter (he did not put it to himself in those words and only perhaps vaguely realized that they were thoroughly appropriate) he had so far expressed no disapprobation of these literary vagaries. It was not what Peter had been sent to Oxford for, but no matter. He had all the rest of his life in which to devote himself to acquiring an intimate knowledge of the affairs of Metcalfe & Co., so that when the time came he could assume the guidance and direction of its manifold activities with that same grasp, that wise, prudent foresight characteristic of those who had preceded him in that important office.

John Metcalfe was a hard, capable man of unwearying industry, shrewd, honest, and relentless. His thin, lantern-jawed face (the very antithesis of his wife's sleek, pink comeliness) with its graying hair, its light, keen, piercing eyes, its sharp, thin slit of a mouth, was not the face of a man who could easily be trifled with. No one could lightly hope to do a deal with John Metcalfe, and any one approaching him with that intention

must have relinquished all idea of a successful issue at first sight of him securely ensconced behind his huge roll-topped desk. You would have realized at once that you were up against something as hard as the nether rock and twice as resistant. Perhaps that was what Peter felt when the very night of his return from the Rest House Sir John made use of the opportunity offered by the escapade to reprove his son for his careless thoughtlessness in thus exposing his sister to useless danger, and to assure him that it was impossible to let him hang about in idleness any longer. It was nearly six months since Peter, having at last taken his degree, had come down from Oxford. He was now nearly twenty-four, an age at which serious men were resolutely set upon their intended career.

As he stood opposite his father that night in the fine study at Mildon Place—that magnificent Surrey residence protected and sheltered from inclement northern airs by a ridge of the North Downs—Peter's mind traveled inconsequently back to that day some six years ago when during his last term at Eton he had been summoned to London to be present at the double wedding of his two sisters. He realized that his future brothers-in-law were the respective heirs to peerages of undoubted antiquity and importance. (Somehow he had always imagined that Beatrice would marry their young neighbor Claude Vernon.) It had seemed to Peter then that everything had suddenly changed, and that the old happy family group, with its quarrels and friendships, had been broken up forever. Even famil-

iar figures were scarcely recognizable. Diana and Beatrice were beautiful brides even to a brother's critical eyes. They were tall, slender, perfectly arrayed, but he had liked them better when he had last seen them in their country coats and skirts of hard blue serge. He felt actually timid of them, and tried to remind himself of old quarrelling, old friendliness, of that rough give-and-take of which family life is largely composed when the children are all pretty much of an age and have spent their nursery and school-room days together. And although Beatrice cried a little when she went away, which brought her abruptly into line with the past, Diana was charmingly self-possessed and played her part with a finished perfection. Diana had always snubbed him, and perhaps he had not felt very sorry that she was going away, but he felt that he should miss Beatrice. The double wedding had been certainly a very grand affair, and it made quite a stir in the midst of one of those brilliant London seasons that characterized the brief and glorious Edwardian epoch, and which were never so perfectly repeated after the death of that lamented monarch. That year had smiled upon the Metcalfe family, for Sir John had been included among the Birthday Honors. Many papers, in commenting upon this, had predicted confidently that he would hereafter be the recipient of even more dazzling marks of recognition than that of a mere baronetcy. It was then that Lady Metcalfe's complacency seemed to acquire a more definite value, destroying, indeed, the little sense of humor she had ever possessed.

Peter had felt even then that on that day, so symptomatic of Metcalfe prosperity and advancement, his sisters had arrived at those cross-roads which in every life must invariably present themselves. He wondered how far they had been free to choose, and suspected that at least in Beatrice's case the path had been kindly but most firmly designated by the Olympian finger. His mind was chaotic and confused and full of these reminiscences, although he was really trying to pay attention to his father's words. He had even expressed his regret for yesterday's happenings; his hope that Peggy would be none the worse for the adventure. Sir John accepted the regret, and then proceeded to inform Peter of his wishes and intentions concerning his elder son's future career. Immediately after Christmas he would be expected to attend the office regularly, going up to town by the eight-thirty train, three-quarters of an hour earlier than the one which had the daily privilege of conveying Sir John to the fastnesses of the metropolis. He would begin just as any other clerk, with the same hours, the same salary, and scarcely more privileges than were absolutely essential to uphold the prestige of the family. There was nothing like beginning at the very bottom of the ladder to ensure a sound practical knowledge of and insight into the business of the firm. Of course he was six years older than the average new clerk. It was a disadvantage for which even an Oxford degree could hardly compensate.

"Still, I didn't want for various reasons to tie you down too early," said Sir John, with the air

of a monarch making magnanimous concessions.

Peter did not care in the least whether he began at the bottom or the top. Either place would have been equally distasteful to him. If he had been able to step straight into his father's august shoes and assume the crown and scepter of directorship he would have loathed it just the same. It was the office that mattered. He would enter it never to emerge therefrom, until the dreadful soul-destroying process was complete and the Firm would once more bear the triple title of Metcalfe, Son & Co.

He knew, though, that he would yield, partly from the filial motives so firmly inculcated by his parents during early impressionable years, and partly from the indolence of the artistic temperament which makes it always easier for the possessor to submit rather than to struggle.

He was not aware that the incertitude of his own intentions had given his worthy parents moments of acute misgiving and anxiety. Sir John rejoiced when he perceived that this natural anxiety was to be allayed by the admirable subjection of the young man to his own wishes. To Peter these had indeed appeared less in the light of wishes than of commands forcibly and peremptorily uttered, and backed up at one point in the interview by a veiled threat. Sir John never lost his temper; the more angry he was the more imperturbably glacial he became. People who lost their tempers were apt to lose their money, he was fond of affirming. But his anger was none the less apparent to Peter when just for a single

moment he had wavered, and expostulated against the immolation of his very youth and freedom. He had gone to the window and pulled aside the blind and looked out at the still snowy landscape, illuminated by a wonderful moon. The trees in the park were ebony-black, and showed massed velvet shadows against that world of luminous whiteness. It seemed to call to Peter in the name of liberty and freedom, and it provoked from him that futile remonstrance.

"Sometimes I don't think I want to be a rich man. This sort of life suffocates me. I've sometimes envied the tramps sleeping out under the stars!"

John Metcalfe's face became slightly cynical.

"You will have a month's holiday in the summer, and you can spend it sleeping under haystacks, if that kind of folly appeals to you!" And he shut his mouth like a trap.

After a few more delicate personalities of the kind, Peter, pale and defeated, acquiesced. It was the easier plan.

"And look here — Metcalfe's doesn't want slackers. You're to give all your attention to the work as well as your time and your brains. It's your life, remember! Don't start by being sulky and quarreling with your bread and butter!"

It was a substantial defeat, and when Peter had retired Sir John went in search of his wife. He found her alone in the drawing-room.

"Where's Peggy?" he asked.

"She was tired, so I sent her to bed early," replied Lady Metcalfe.

Sir John sat down by the fire, took out a cigarette, lit it, and then began gravely to recount the substance of his interview with Peter. When he had related with perfect accuracy all that he had said and all that Peter had so unwisely said, Lady Metcalfe laid her hand on her husband's arm and murmured: "Dear John, you always did know exactly how to take the boy!"

She smiled with that complacent contentment that always soothed and flattered Sir John with its hint of worshiping approval. Other people might have trouble with their children, but in nine cases out of ten it was their own fault, the inevitable harvest of an unwise indulgence or an imprudent severity in youth. She congratulated herself that they had never had any trouble of the kind—only a few passing clouds easily dispelled by a timely and discreet demonstration of parental power and prerogative.

Sir John accepted the compliment and kissed his wife on both of her fat pink cheeks, and he, too, perhaps secretly congratulated himself on the smooth mechanism of his private life—so different from that of most men!

She knew the traces of past storms, and perceiving that the interview, though perfectly satisfactory in its ending, had not been quite smooth in its course, she prudently abstained from mentioning her own slight annoyance evoked by the obstinacy of Peggy. Besides, she felt certain that Peggy would approach her on the morrow with the required promise, and perhaps a timid apology that it had not been at once freely and frankly made.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE following morning after breakfast—at which his sister had not appeared, having not as yet recovered, he was informed, from the fatigue consequent upon his careless exposure of her delicate person to the wild snowstorms of Somersetshire—Peter found his way up to the old schoolroom on the second floor, which now, no longer consecrated to its original use, had become a den for Peggy. It was a large, comfortable room with a deep bay window and a lovely view over the Park, with even a glimpse in the far distance of the blue Sussex Weald. The walls were paneled with white woodwork, and on two sides they were filled with fitted book-cases to the height of about five feet. There were flowers in abundance in both vases and pots. The chairs were covered with fresh and pretty chintz, and there was a white carpet with a border of pink rosebuds on the floor. Altogether it made a very dainty and charming sitting-room for Peggy.

Photographs of Beatrice and Diana occupied prominent positions on the tables and piano, and almost provided a complete history of those successful ladies. You could see them presented by the art of Alice Hughes with lilies in their hands and looking girlishly innocent, almost simpering, in the days of their respective betrothals. Further on they appeared as brides; a little later they hung in beautifully maternal attitudes over elaborate cradles whence an infant's indetermi-

nate features were obscurely visible; now they were photographed with two children, now (but this only in the case of Beatrice) with three. The fashion of their hair and of their frocks differed in almost every photograph, but the faces remained unchanged; Diana's calm, determined, secure in its crystallized, unshakable conviction of superiority; Beatrice's gentle, smiling, suggestive both of acquiescence and submission.

Peggy, who for one wild, unforgotten moment had been the recipient of Beatrice's confidences a week before the wedding, used to marvel sometimes at that smile, that gentle air of acceptance, and wondered, too, if those dear cherubic baby faces had compensated for all that her sister had deliberately forfeited. Peggy had had moments of apprehensive dread that some similar fate might overtake herself.

As Peter came into the room that morning the familiar photographs arrested his attention. He felt a fellow-feeling for Beatrice—who had cried. He wondered if she, too, had had this yearning for a simple freedom—for long nights spent out under the stars, away from an atmosphere of clinging comfort that choked you. But the latest presentment of her reassured him, and he knew from his recent visit to Lavender that it was no fictitious picture. It was admirably natural—this young mother sitting with her children, holding the baby on her knee while little Ethne and Jack stood one on each side of her, clinging to her. Beatrice, a parent herself, had presumably done with the heart-burnings of youth; she had joined the opposite camp, and apparently she was per-

fectly satisfied and contented with the lot that had been chosen for her.

A slight movement in the window made him turn abruptly from his meditation upon Beatrice, and he became aware of the dark mass of hair, the pale averted profile, which was all he could at present see of Peggy, whose sympathy he had come to seek. He went up and roughly flung an enveloping arm about her.

"Pegs, old girl!" he said, and there was a sob in his voice and the tears raced unashamedly down his face.

Peggy did not take her eyes off her book; that break in Peter's voice warned her that it would be better not to look at him just then. But she put up her hand and slid it round his neck. Peggy was full of delicate instincts; her sensitiveness was not of the kind which is self-centered and shrinks only from personal wounds; she was as sharply aware of pain in those she loved as she could ever be in herself.

The two faces were singularly alike. They were the only two dark Metcalfes, and it was perhaps because of their inability to conform to the family standard of looks that they had both been relegated since their nursery days to the position of ugly ducklings.

"I couldn't come and tell you about it last night," he said at last, "you'd gone to bed."

"Tell me about it now, Peter dear," said Peggy. In spite of the four years between their ages they had always been the closest of friends. Like called to like. Only Beatrice had ever touched the fringe of that friendship, and she had

been a deserter; she had gone off, if not to the enemy, at least to the opposing camp.

Peter bit his lip, forcing back the tears.

"If one could only make him lose his temper! But he just sat there as cold as ice, as hard as iron. First there was a lot about our accident—that seems to have been the last straw that brought about the crisis! But the fiat's gone forth—I'm not to be allowed to spend my days in idleness any more. I'm to start work directly after Christmas. Pegs—I'm to belong to Metcalfe & Co. until the end of my life!"

Peggy put up her hand and stroked his hair; her touch was soft, and the little action did something toward soothing that ruffled spirit.

"If it were only for a few years I could stick it right enough! But *all* my life!" That gray vision of endless years, spent as his father spent them, spread out before him in an interminable monotonous procession. The waste of it when life might be so beautiful in its freedom! "Just for the sake of those loathsome flesh-pots!"

He writhed with self-contempt at his own too easy capitulation.

"I'm as weak as—as Beatrice!" he declared.

Peggy colored nervously. That was a subject which she had never discussed with Peter, and how much he knew or guessed she could not tell. Beatrice, repenting of her own indiscretion, had sworn her young sister to secrecy.

"I shall be the only one left unprovided for," said Peggy softly.

"It'll be your turn next, Pegs. Depend upon it, they've already got something up their sleeve

for you. It's not possible they could have overlooked *you!*"

But something in the light, careless tone in which he uttered this prophecy made Peggy feel a sinking of the heart, a renewal of those dreadful apprehensions that had once or twice before assailed her. As if to fortify herself against these shadowy fears she put her arm again round Peter's neck and kissed him.

"I shall never choose the flesh-pots! I won't! I won't!" she said with decision.

"You wait and see," said Peter, ominously. "I wonder sometimes that they've left you alone so long."

"I must go down and see mother now," said Peggy; "she wants to see the letter I've written to Miss Morford." She longed to tell Peter about the conversation she had had with her mother last night, but some curious new instinct of reticence prevented her.

"I hope you've given them some nice message from me, too," said Peter.

"Yes—I said we both thanked them very much," answered Peggy.

She left her brother alone and letter in hand made her way to her mother's sanctum.

Strangely enough, she felt none of that nervous trembling which she had expected would certainly assail her at this critical moment. In the contemplation of Peter's acute and present woes she had allowed her own perplexities to slip into the background. And the morning had given her courage. She felt braced for the interview, although she had not at all made up her

mind what she intended to say. Lady Metcalfe would, no doubt, give her a lead.

Her mother was already seated at her fine old Sheraton writing-table in a room which might well have stood for a final example of meticulous comfort. It was hung with pale rose-pink, and all the flowers that were massed there in great quantities repeated in various shades this exquisite tone. The carpet repeated faithfully the prevalent hue. Everything was perfect—the flowers, the harmony, the detailed luxury. There were books arranged in fine old book-cases; new copies of the latest novels lay on the table. There was a good deal of valuable china, and a few priceless etchings hung on the walls. It was so warm that unless one looked outside at the snowy Park one could never have believed the season to be mid-winter.

Peggy came in quietly. She held her small head erect. She looked like the Metcalfes, her mother reflected, not defiant exactly but incurably obstinate. Diana and Beatrice through all the years of their maidenhood had never looked like that. Yet in that brief survey Lady Metcalfe did wonder whether many people could be of the same opinion as Sir Hugh Quentin, who had once observed that the youngest Metcalfe girl was far more beautiful than either of her sisters. It was a remark that had been repeated to her, and had been received by her with a momentary sensation of annoyed astonishment.

But it was impossible to believe that Metcalfe standards could possibly be at fault, and she forthwith proceeded to attach some ulterior mo-

tive of definite partiality for Peggy herself to the speech of this eminently desirable young man.

"Well, Peggy, my dear," she said, offering a plump pink cheek, which Peggy dutifully kissed.

"Good morning, mother," said Peggy. "I have brought this letter to Miss Morford to show you."

Already that sojourn at the Rest House was becoming almost unreal in its remote distance.

Lady Metcalfe read the letter with a kind of scrutinizing attention. There was, however, little amiss with it, and she gave it back to Peggy, saying:

"That does quite well. Perhaps you have said a little more than was absolutely necessary—after all, you were only there one night. But Peter tells me they really seemed very poor, so perhaps it is better to show them you appreciated their efforts."

This little speech jarred upon Peggy—she could hardly tell why.

"Have you been thinking over what I said to you last night, Peggy?" asked her mother.

"Yes, mother," said Peggy.

"I have been thinking about it, too," said Lady Metcalfe pleasantly, "and I have decided not to insist upon your making that promise. For one thing, I feel there is really no need, for I am sure I can rely upon you to respect my wishes, and then you will have no opportunity of disregarding them, for you never go anywhere without proper chaperonage. An incident such as happened the day before yesterday can not possibly occur again."

Peggy felt convinced that something must have happened in the interim to cause her mother to compromise in this masterly way. She wondered if any explanation would be vouchsafed, and Lady Metcalfe's next words gave her a clue.

"I have had a charming letter from Beatrice," said Lady Metcalfe; "she tells me that she enjoyed having you and Peter there very much, and she hopes that you will go back to Lavender for the Hunt Ball in January. Should you like that, Peggy?"

"Oh, yes, I should like to go very much," said Peggy; "has she asked Peter?"

"No—she doesn't say anything about Peter. But he couldn't go in any case. Peter must work now. Your father says he has been idle quite long enough. It would have been better for him if he had begun long ago, for there is nothing so demoralizing as idleness. You must not expect, Peggy, always to have Peter to take you about. But I can trust you to Beatrice—she can look after you as well as I can, and she knows my wishes so well."

Peggy was not in full possession of the clue; had she been allowed to read Beatrice's letter her knowledge would have been complete. For there had been a sentence in young Lady Charsley's letter which made the proposed visit a very desirable one for Peggy. "Hugh Quentin is to stay with us, too. You know, he admired Peggy last summer at Oxford. Even if nothing comes of it—for Peggy does seem absurdly childish and unformed for her age—I should like him to meet her again. Please see that she has plenty of

pretty frocks, for there are sure to be some private dances as well."

That was so like Beatrice—she was so tactful and understanding. Sir Hugh was a young and rich man—Lady Metcalfe knew almost to a farthing his rent roll and almost to an inch his acres. She had met him once and had found him passably good-looking and very agreeable. And though of course it would not be such a brilliant match as Diana or Beatrice had made, it was certainly quite as good as Peggy had any right to expect. Lady Metcalfe was anxious now that Peggy should marry soon. There had been a certain manifestation of independence of thought and action in her conduct last night which had startled Lady Metcalfe. That touch of unconventionality would be certain to increase as she grew older; it was far better to check it at once. The time was ripe for the proper administration of Peggy's future.

"That is all I wanted to say to you, Peggy," she said, and took up her pen.

When her daughter had gone Lady Metcalfe wrote a note to Beatrice accepting her invitation for Peggy. Beatrice's letter had turned her thoughts into a most promising channel, and she began to feel that the ultimate solution of Peggy's problem was at hand. She had compromised successfully, and thus had avoided any possible scene. Scenes were so very upsetting. Her mind was riveted upon the determination to promote a marriage between Peggy and Hugh Quentin. She was glad to think that the idea had also commended itself to Beatrice. It would be the

best possible way of driving any silly nonsense which Peggy might have picked up at the Rest House out of her foolish little head.

"With Peter as a junior partner and Peggy married we shall feel that all our children are most happily settled in life, and that we have done our very best for them," thought Lady Metcalfe. The knowledge of Peter's short-lived resistance had left no impression upon her at all, for she never allowed her mind to dwell unnecessarily upon anything that might prove disagreeable in the contemplation. The best way of cherishing a comfortable conviction that all was for the best was never to allow yourself to believe that there was another side to the picture. Peter, dear boy, would be most grateful to them in a few years' time, and Peggy would recall with undoubted feelings of shame her absurd if transient admiration for the Errors of Rome.

However, she never ran any risks, and in her letter to Beatrice she informed her of the adventures Peter and Peggy had met with on the way home, and of her own fears that Peggy had permitted herself to be unduly impressed by the Roman Catholic atmosphere of the place. "No doubt it will soon wear off, but you know how troublesome and obstinate she has always been. I have forbidden her most strictly to go inside a Roman Catholic church, and I hope while she is with you that you will not let her have any opportunity of disobeying me. So far I have not said anything to your father about it, for you know how nervous it makes her when he gets at all angry with her. She is such a mixture of timidity

and obstinacy, which makes it very difficult to deal with her."

But she really entertained not the slightest anxiety about her own ultimate capability of dealing with Peggy. She thought it would be quite soon enough if the marriage were to take place immediately after Easter. That would give her plenty of time to get the trousseau and make all the necessary preparations. She felt almost excited at the prospect.

CHAPTER VII

SOME weeks later, when external serenity had completely descended upon Mildon and Peter had begun work at the office with no further manifestation of rebellion or discontent, Peggy, accompanied by her maid and with her trunks full of pretty new frocks, started off on her visit to Lavender. She had no idea why her mother had "made such a fuss" about her clothes on this particular occasion, for to disclose one's hand to Peggy often met with the most unexpected results, as Lady Metcalfe knew by experience. Nor did the real reason penetrate to her mind even after her arrival at Lavender, when she found Hugh Quentin already ensconced there, and became aware, too, of his disposition to monopolize her.

Peggy enjoyed staying at Lavender; she had seldom been there without her mother or Peter before, and she felt a pleasurable little sense of independence at the prospect. The little crowd of people who had assembled there for the festivities were nearly all strangers to her; the only tolerably familiar face among them was Hugh Quentin, who had been at Oxford with Peter, and whom she had met many times during the Eights' week last summer. She had gone there under Diana's wing, and Lady Maddinard had reported favorably to Beatrice upon the impression Peggy had undoubtedly made.

Lady Charsley was a pretty blonde woman

of twenty-five. The first brilliancy of her youth had faded a little, for she had been delicate since her marriage. She was very tall and slender. They all thought it was such a pity Peggy should be so small; it gave her such a childish look.

The babies were darlings. There was Ethne—a dainty, golden-haired creature of five; she looked like a doll, Peggy thought. Next came Jack, who was a year younger. The baby, who was only a year old, was a faithful reproduction of Ethne; her name was Verena. Beatrice was passionately devoted to them, Jack especially being the idol of the house. His parents worshiped him. Peggy preferred Ethne, who had gentle, affectionate ways. It seemed to her sometimes that Lord Charsley scarcely counted at all. He was a bald, red-faced man of about forty, very good-natured, devoted to his wife and with a cheery, rather boisterous manner.

Beatrice was very indulgent to the babies; she never scolded them and never allowed them to be punished or threatened. They were very good and tractable, and when they appeared downstairs their behavior was perfect and indeed almost arrogant in its dignity.

Lady Charsley welcomed her sister warmly, kissing her on both cheeks and saying how well she looked. But they no longer felt like sisters or even intimate friends; it seemed to Peggy that all Beatrice's new life and interests made a wide gulf between them. She was distressed at the thought and longed to recover something of the old intimacy. But Beatrice was quite out of her reach. It seemed as if she had forgotten the

old Mildon days, so absorbed was she in her children. Peggy thought she had changed more than Diana.

Once when they were alone Beatrice tried to draw her out upon the subject of the Rest House, but Peggy was wary in her replies, and exhibited a baffling reticence. Lady Charsley thought her mother had made a fuss about nothing, and that the impression must have been less profound than she had imagined. There was no chance of Peggy disobeying her while she was at Lavender; there was not a Catholic church within miles; the nearest, a private chapel at Bargrove belonging to Mrs. Dalton, was quite six miles away; and Beatrice was not at all intimate with the Daltons.

Peggy was really quite passable-looking now, Beatrice thought, in that slight, dark, pale way; her clothes were charming; she could talk intelligently enough if she chose, but she was quiet and lacking in animation and gaiety, and her manner was grave and ungirlish. If she intended to marry Quentin her behavior was certainly perfect; she was elusive, quietly resisting his tendency to monopolize her; when they met she was friendly, but utterly unembarrassed.

"She doesn't give Quentin much of a show!" remarked Lord Charsley to his wife one evening in private. "Does she mean to have him?"

"I don't know," Beatrice was obliged to confess. "I haven't talked to her about it. I didn't know, you see, how she would take it." She fell back on the old formula. "Peggy has always been tiresome!"

"Well, she's a fine-looking girl," said Lord Charsley with a good-natured grin. "Quentin'll be lucky if he gets her!"

"Fine-looking?" repeated Beatrice. For her Peggy had always been the ugly duckling, and she still clung unconsciously to the Mildon standards.

"If she doesn't take Hugh she may get some one much better. I shouldn't rush her into it if I were you, Beatrice. I suppose she'll have the same dot as the rest of you, although she is the youngest?"

"I'm sure my father will do what is quite just," said Beatrice with a little touch of hauteur, "if Peggy makes a marriage that he approves of."

Hugh Quentin had come with another Oxford friend of his own and Peter's, a Mr. Rollo Carter. Mr. Henry Sacheverell had brought his wife, Lady Philippa; they were a young couple recently married and very much in love. Violet Hawthorn, a tall, dark girl with an independent, dominating manner, came alone. Rollo Carter showed her the greatest attention, although it was rumored that she had twice refused to marry him. Apparently this did not interfere at all with their intimate friendship. They played golf together nearly all day. Lord Charsley's eldest sister, who was many years his senior, brought her girl, who was just out, a timid, shy, rather plain girl called Ella. Peggy felt a little sorry for her, she seemed lonely and rather friendless and her mother snubbed her. Lady Trowhaven was an immense, majestic woman who looked capable of crushing any one. She seemed to

Peggy to be a kind of super-Olympian, and Ella, whose personal appearance resembled that of a white mouse, had yielded utterly, and was reduced to a submission that might be called groveling. She hardly opened her lips in her mother's presence.

They had all assembled on Saturday afternoon, and the Hunt Ball was fixed up for the following Tuesday. That night just before they went up to bed Peggy heard Beatrice say to Lady Philippa:

"But you'll be back in time for luncheon, I hope, Philly?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. We shall have our breakfast at the Daltons, and come back here very soon afterward."

"It's such a long way to go on these dark, cold winter mornings," said Beatrice, with a touch of protest in her voice.

"Yes, but we brought the motor on purpose and one doesn't like to miss," said Lady Philippa.

"Mr. Sacheverell's going with you?" asked Beatrice.

"Oh, yes. Henry always comes. And Mrs. Dalton especially invited him."

Beatrice laughed good-humoredly.

"You'll never be happy, Philly, till you've roped your Henry safely in!"

Peggy was watching them almost involuntarily, and she could not help noticing that at these words a great change came over Lady Philippa's face. She flushed, and her eyes became so bright that one could fancy that there were tears in

them. She dropped her voice, and looking very earnestly at Beatrice, she said:

"So many, many people are praying for him. And he's *ever* so much nearer now than when we first married!"

What did she mean? Peggy desired almost passionately to learn the import of this conversation. Clearly it was something that touched the pretty little bride very closely indeed. What was this precious gift she desired that her husband might possess? Was it anything connected with religion? She felt almost certain that it must be. She longed to talk to Lady Philippa.

Suddenly Beatrice turned and saw Peggy standing there, and an expression of annoyance came over her face.

"What are you doing there, Peggy?" she said in quite a severe tone. "I did not know you were there. You mustn't stand about in that silent, silly way. Go over there and talk to Ella—she is looking miserably bored and out of it."

Peggy turned crimson and moved across the room. She had hoped that when Beatrice had gone she could have had a word with Lady Philippa quite alone. But after all, that would have been impossible, for the next moment Henry Sacheverell joined his wife and Beatrice, who soon left them alone together. It was easy to see that they were absorbed in each other. Why were they going to motor out before breakfast on the following day? Who was Mrs. Dalton? Peggy had never heard Beatrice mention her.

Peggy had not been talking to Ella very long when Hugh Quentin came across to that end of

the room and sat down near them. Presently Lady Trowhaven called her daughter away to play bridge, and Peggy was left alone with Hugh.

"Do you know a Mrs. Dalton who lives not far from here?" she inquired, thinking he might be able to throw some light on the conversation, as he knew the neighborhood well.

"Oh, yes; I know her a little," said Quentin carelessly; "I've stayed there once. Young Dalton was up at Oxford with me. It's rather a weird house to stay in, though—they're Roman Catholics and have a chapel of their own, and they seem to spend half their time in it."

Peggy turned quite pink and drew in her breath sharply. She felt as if she had always really understood what Lady Philippa had meant when she had said with such eager earnestness that "Henry was much nearer now than when they were first married." She must be a Catholic, and to-morrow she was going to motor over to the Daltons to hear Mass, as it was Sunday.

Peggy felt suddenly excited, and she was able to recover something of those feelings and impressions she had experienced at the Rest House.

She looked across the room at Lady Philippa, who was still sitting beside her husband, and she felt an envy of her so deep and profound that it pierced her heart like a sword. She thought to herself, "Oh, if I could only go with her. But Beatrice would never let me—Beatrice was angry with me because I heard what they were saying."

It was clear that Beatrice had not intended her to know that Lady Philippa was a Catholic.

"So many people are praying for him!" There had been something wonderfully beautiful and touching in the way Lady Philippa had said those words. It had been such a simple, earnest, and withal profoundly loving little speech. Now that Peggy understood, it touched her very heart. Evidently she had the same ideals as those that prevailed at the Rest House; she seemed to speak the very language that the Morfords had spoken. Peggy could hardly restrain herself from getting up and going boldly across the room to speak to Lady Philippa.

Once she even contemplated finding out the hour of their departure and appearing downstairs at that time and entreating Lady Philippa to permit her to accompany them. But this mad imagining was not one that could possibly materialize. These people were practically unknown to her; she could not possibly force herself upon them without some kind of explanation, which she dared not bring herself to give. They might even ask Beatrice's permission to take her, and Peggy felt certain from her sister's manner just now that she was fully cognizant of that incident at the Rest House. It was more than likely that Lady Metcalfe had coupled the information with a word of warning about Peggy. She sighed, and answered Hugh at random. She wished he would get up and go away. She looked round the room. Rollo Carter and Violet Hawthorn were playing poker patience at a little table at the other end of the room. There was

a rubber of bridge going on in the small drawing-room beyond, and she could hear Lady Trowhaven's voice announcing "Two Royals" as if she defied any one to outbid her. The rest of the company had sorted themselves into groups. Hugh had refused to play bridge; he preferred to remain and talk to Peggy Metcalfe, although she was much more serious and subdued than when he had seen her at Oxford in the midst of the Eights' festivities.

No one else present was a patch on her, he thought to himself. Violet Hawthorn, much be-paraphrased in the halfpenny papers and considered a beauty, was not in his eyes pretty at all. She was striking-looking in that dark, imperious way, but her independent air and almost insolent self-possession did not correspond with Hugh's ideal of womanhood at all. He did not approve of the way in which she "carried on" with Rollo Carter, for all the world as if they were engaged to be married. There was no question of an engagement, and they were both quite well off, yet they behaved like an engaged couple and were absorbed in each other's society. Rollo fetched and carried for her in a way that was almost degrading, commented Hugh, who was fond of his friend and hated to see him treated in this way. Lady Philippa Sacheverell was very pretty and charming-looking, but Peggy put her quite into the shade. Hugh was encouraging himself to fall in love with the youngest Miss Metcalfe. He was very fond of Peter, and had always heard a good deal from him about the little sister at home. The Metcalfes could hardly

now be called self-made, since the Firm was three generations old and both Peggy's sisters had made such brilliant marriages. Hugh was a very prudent young man; he approached matrimony with caution, but he was none the less deliberately approaching it. Once he had been passionately in love with the beautiful young Irish actress, Deirdre O'Mara, and when she refused to marry him he had been quite broken-hearted for at least a year. Afterward he began to perceive the wisdom of Providence in withholding from the young at least the fulfilment of their heart's desire. Such a marriage would have been disastrous to a man who wished to shine in the political world. Deirdre was only a peasant girl, beautiful and charming, but quite unfit to be the wife of an ambitious man. There was something about Peggy that had reminded him, in the early days of their acquaintance, of that lost love—something in the dark sweep of the hair, in the shadowy brown eyes so full of soft mystery. He had often thought of Peggy during the months that had elapsed since their last meeting, and he had wished to see her again. Now he felt that his mind was practically made up. The marriage would be in every way suitable. He really did not need Peggy's money, for he was a rich man and had a fine old property in Kent, still money was always useful.

Peggy, who feared that her inattention must have seemed almost rude, tried to make up for it by talking very agreeably to him for a little longer than she might have otherwise done. She asked no more questions about the Daltons, and

Hugh had left that subject and was telling her about Westcombe, his place in Kent, and of some improvements he intended to make there, adding a hope that some day she and Peter would come and pay him a visit.

"Thank you very much—I should like to come," said Peggy, and she put sufficient eagerness and enthusiasm into her voice to raise Hugh's hopes to the very skies.

CHAPTER VIII

PEGGY did not see the Sacheverells on the following day until luncheon, and she had no opportunity of speaking to Lady Philippa until that meal was over. She did not sit near her, and she fancied that Beatrice had perhaps arranged that she should not do so. Lady Charsley was evidently on her guard, and Peggy felt that she had been compelled to force her point a little when she met Lady Philippa by chance in the hall and asked her timidly if she would come to her room with her for a few minutes.

It was the first time she had spoken to her, and Lady Philippa looked a trifle surprised at the request. Until then she had hardly noticed her hostess's younger sister, and she wondered what on earth she could want to say to her.

"I can come for a very few minutes if you like," said Lady Philippa. "I have promised to go for a walk with Henry, so I shall have to go and put on my things almost at once."

Although it was not very promising, it was better than nothing, and Peggy led the way to her own sitting-room. She occupied the little suite which Beatrice always kept for her own family; it was in rather a remote part of the house, but the rooms were pretty and looked out on to the old-fashioned walled garden, where in summer there was a famous herbaceous border, now indicated only by a few dry stalks and sodden, shriveled leaves.

Lady Philippa sat down in an armchair near

the fire, waiting for Peggy to speak. The girl looked nervous and hesitating.

"Did you want to ask me anything?" inquired Lady Philippa after a short pause in which Peggy wondered how she should begin, and whether, indeed, she would find courage to begin at all.

"Yes, please," said Peggy. Her breath came in short and quick gasps. "Dreadfully," she added.

Lady Philippa glanced at the clock with a touch of impatience. She was preoccupied with thoughts of her husband; she did not want to keep him waiting. And the girl, if she really had anything to say, was obviously too nervous to say it.

"Couldn't you have asked your sister?" she said.

"Oh, no—Beatrice knows nothing about it—she couldn't help me at all."

"I am not fond of confidences," said Lady Philippa; "if it is something about yourself—something private that you can't tell your sister—I think I would rather not hear it."

Although she was not many years older than Peggy, Lady Philippa had a good deal of decision of character, and she imagined, too, that Peggy was much younger than she really was—about seventeen, in fact.

"It is this. You're a Catholic, aren't you? It's *that* that I want to speak to you about!"

"Yes, I am a Catholic," said Lady Philippa.

Peggy looked at her in desperation and said: "I want to be one more than I can ever tell you!"

Then all reticence vanished. Lady Philippa was no longer an unwilling or reluctant listener. Her face softened a little, and although she said nothing, Peggy felt encouraged to proceed. She related rapidly in a few words and with unconscious dramatic effect the story of her adventure at the Rest House, of her first and profound initiation into the mysteries of the Catholic Faith. Frederick Morford played but a slight and insignificant part in the recital, his name was not mentioned and Peggy only referred to him occasionally as the son of the house.

Lady Philippa's attention was thoroughly aroused. She did not for a moment doubt the girl's sincerity. There was something remarkable and unusual in the little history, and the simplicity of the narrative touched her. It was like a little miracle—but then was not every conversion in its own way a miracle?

"How old are you?" she inquired, when Peggy stopped.

"I am twenty."

"I suppose you will have to wait until you are of age before you can take any definite step. Waiting won't hurt you; it will test and prove your perseverance. And you are very young—you may change your mind."

"I can never change my mind—I have made a promise," said Peggy Metcalfe.

"Your mother will object, perhaps?"

"Yes—she was annoyed when I told her about my going to Mass and Benediction—she wanted me to promise that I wouldn't go into a Catholic church. Lady Philippa, I feel *starving*."

Lady Philippa rose and with an impulse of kindness she laid her hand on Peggy's shoulder. She was not a demonstrative woman, but the glimpse into that young and ardent soul had stirred her sympathy and even her affection.

"My dear, I will think it over. But I don't see how I can possibly help you yet. Later on, perhaps, when you are of age. But if I can I will go over to the Daltons again while I am here and consult Father Dominic about you."

She saw by the clock that she must have kept Henry waiting quite ten minutes. Such a thing had never happened before. She was hurrying out of the room when the door opened and Beatrice entered.

"Oh, Philly! I didn't know you were here. Mr. Sacheverell's waiting for you. I came up to look for Peggy. They're all going for a walk up to the Beacon, Peggy, and Hugh's been asking for you."

"Oh, Beatrice, I am tired. I don't really want to go for a walk," pleaded Peggy.

But Lady Charsley spoke with an air of brisk decision not unlike her mother's:

"What nonsense, Peggy! You can't possibly stay moping up here." She turned to Lady Philippa and said good-humoredly, "You mustn't let Peggy bore you, Philly."

"Oh, she hasn't bored me at all," said Lady Philippa, smiling kindly at Peggy; "we have been making friends and I hope some day she will come and pay us a visit in town."

She went out of the room, leaving the two sisters together.

"I don't think mother would care about your going to the Sacheverells," said Beatrice. "Of course, it's a very nice house and all that and you would meet nice people, but Philly is a Catholic and a dreadfully priest-ridden little person. I believe the Sacheverells were quite shocked at the things poor Henry had to promise when he married her—such tyrannous conditions. I believe they wanted him to draw back, for really it was no marriage for him. Although the Perrymouths are such an old family, they couldn't give Philly a farthing, they are so miserably poor. But he was so much in love with her that he utterly refused to give her up, and promised everything they told him to. Such a pity, for their children—if they ever have any—will all have to be brought up as Roman Catholics!"

"Perhaps he will become one, too," said Peggy softly.

Beatrice looked at her keenly. She longed to examine her, but she felt sure that Peggy would parry her questions. Her silence on the subject of the Rest House was not due to indifference—of that Lady Charsley now felt quite sure. Peggy had some deeper reason for her reticence. She said quietly:

"I really don't think mother would care for you to become very intimate with Philly Sacheverell. Of course, she is a friend of mine and I've known her for years, but I know she has done some very injudicious things. Catholics often do," she added. "Did she ask to come up here with you, Peggy?"

"No; I asked her to come," said Peggy.

"She must have thought it very odd of you when you hardly know her," said Beatrice.

"I think she did—at first," said Peggy.

Beatrice went away feeling a little baffled, but before leaving the room she repeated her injunction to Peggy to get ready for the walk, and her sister made no second remonstrance, but went into her bedroom and put on her hat and a long fur coat. The day was cold and there was a good deal of wind, and Peggy dreaded the long expedition to the Beacon—a favorite Sunday afternoon walk of Lord Charsley's. He was fond of victimizing his guests by entreating them to accompany him, and to-day few had the strength or determination to resist. But the Sacheverells had gone off together for a tramp, and Rollo Carter and Violet Hawthorn, careless of all the unwritten rules of the house, were playing golf together in the Park.

Beatrice remained at home, and she was glad to be alone and think over this affair of Peggy. She was a very conscientious person, and this interview that she had surprised between her sister and Lady Philippa had given her considerable food for thought. She had the feeling that Peggy was conducting an intrigue under her very nose, and with a determination of which she knew her to be thoroughly capable. If Philippa chose to try on any of her imprudent proselytizing ways she would find in Peggy a ripe and ready victim. Beatrice felt that she must step in at all costs and "save" Peggy. She owed this

to her mother, who had given her a word of warning that after all had been very necessary. It had been impossible for her to put off the Sacheverells, for they had already received and accepted her invitation before she had received her mother's letter about Peggy. It would be terrible, indeed, if the girl showed any continued obstinacy on the point, and of course it was very significant that she should have refused to make that promise about not entering a Catholic church. If she did take any disastrous step of the kind while she was still too young to know all that it might involve, it would simply ruin all her chances of marrying Hugh Quentin. Beatrice had set her heart on this marriage. She liked Hugh very much, thought him clever and ambitious and well able to manage Peggy. And she and Diana had always had the dreadful fear that Peggy might take it into her head to marry some utterly undesirable person. She was so unlike the rest of them! Lady Metcalfe also shared this fear, and she was very careful not to let Peggy go anywhere alone unless it was to stay with one of her sisters. There was no trusting Peggy! And even though she was now grown up, that obstinate tactlessness of hers seemed to deepen rather than diminish.

Well, she should have little opportunity of talking to Philly Sacheverell—Beatrice made up her mind to that! If necessary she would give Philly a hint on the subject and tell her that Peggy was fanciful, even a little hysterical. It would show Philly not to attach too much im-

portance to any unwise, indiscreet thing Peggy might have said to her.

The Hunt Ball was a very brilliant affair, and even Beatrice was obliged to admit that Peggy looked charming in a soft white charmeuse dress and a string of pearls round her slender throat. She wore no ornament in her simply arranged dark hair. Hugh looked at her with evident approval. Although he had not seen as much of Peggy as he could have wished in these past few days, she had always been very agreeable and pleasant to him when they had met, and he was looking eagerly forward to the dance, which would surely give them an opportunity of seeing much more of each other. Hugh thought he was making progress and then Lady Charsley was so very encouraging, but he could not in the least tell whether he had made a favorable impression—or indeed any impression at all—upon Peggy. There was something baffling about the girl, in those little hesitancies and silences of hers, in the reticence of her manner that corresponded so ill with the childish aspect of her appearance. But the more he was baffled the more attracted he became. Certainly he intended to dance a great deal with Peggy to-night.

Beatrice always arrived late, and dancing was in full swing when she disembarked her large party at the Town Hall. Hugh, who looked extremely well in "pink," claimed Peggy at once for a dance. She was still dancing with him when she became suddenly aware of a familiar dark face turned toward her, and of two dark eyes

regarding her with cold scrutiny. The room seemed to swim round before her eyes and the very music sounded faint and distant, but for the grip of Hugh's arm she thought she must have fallen. That Frederick Morford should be there to-night filled her with a sense of faintness, almost of terror. Her emotion at seeing him surprised even herself. That he should actually be dancing with Philippa Sacheverell filled her with a pang of envy. She remembered Peter had doubted the advisability of inviting him to Milton. She was glad that she had not mentioned his name to Lady Philippa.

When they paused Peggy found that her limbs were trembling; a strange, unaccountable excitement had taken possession of her. Would Frederick come up and claim her acquaintance? Would he ask her to dance with him? Would he discover that she and Lady Philippa knew each other—formed part of the same party to-night? Peggy's mind was so full of these thoughts that she scarcely heard what Hugh was saying to her. The music stopped, and they were just going to leave the room when Lady Philippa and her partner advanced toward them.

Peggy's face was almost deathly pale.

"I think you and Mr. Morford know each other," said Lady Philippa in her careless way.

Peggy looked up and met his eyes. He did not smile as he shook hands with her and asked her for a dance. She answered in a low, nervous tone—so low that he had to stoop a little to hear the words. The knowledge that he knew every detail of her experience at the Rest House filled

her with a dreadful timidity that seemed to rob her of all her self-possession. They were almost strangers, and yet she had given him this intimate insight into her very heart. It was as if they possessed in common a secret so profound that it seemed to hold something of guilt. She moved away now with Hugh, who was getting a little impatient. He had observed her look of shrinking fear as this dark, odd-looking young man had approached them; he had noticed, too, how low her voice had been when she answered him, and how deadly pale she had become. Hugh had never seen her so shy and embarrassed before. She had always seemed to him quite self-possessed, although she was so quiet and grave.

Peggy, indeed, was hardly aware of what she had said to Morford, for a lump had risen in her throat, threatening to close it up, and her lips were so dry she could scarcely articulate.

"Who's that chap?" inquired Hugh, and there was something of denigration in his voice.

"A Mr. Morford," said Peggy.

"Morford? Oh, I suppose he's one of Mrs. Dalton's lot, as he seems to know Lady Philippa. These Catholics always hang together. I imagine that's why they get hold of such queer, backwoodsy people."

Peggy was silent. There was something contemptuous and disdainful in Hugh's tone. And even in that one shy glance Peggy had bestowed upon Morford she had become aware that he was less well dressed than the men of Beatrice's party—than Hugh Quentin, for instance; he had not the same *soigné* look; his clothes were

perhaps less new, less well cut. He was very tall and had an air of strength, but this also made him look a trifle uncouth. He lacked that polished look which Hugh possessed in such perfection. But he was *not* queer—not backwoodsy! Peggy's heart passionately denied this calumny.

"Mrs. Dalton always brings a menagerie," said Hugh, whose jealousy, to tell the truth, had been somewhat keenly aroused by that curious, ill-suppressed emotion Peggy had betrayed at the approach of this man Morford. Hugh had never heard his name before. How and when and where had Peggy made the acquaintance of such a weird-looking person?

Peggy had the good sense to keep her temper; she was intuitively aware that Hugh was annoyed about something, and felt that Morford must in some way have aroused his suspicions.

"Have you known him long?" he asked irritably, after a brief pause.

"Who? Mr. Morford?" She tried to speak his name carelessly. "Oh, no—we met for the first time a few weeks ago."

"Where did you meet him?" asked Hugh. He was so jealous that he could not control his desire to question Peggy. It seemed to him so extraordinary that she should know this peculiar-looking man who did not look at all as if he belonged to the Metcalfes' world.

"In—in Somersetshire," said Peggy.

Presently they went back to the ball-room. Peggy joined Beatrice, who was surrounded by a little group of friends, important county people. She was always popular and admired.

In a few minutes Peggy saw Morford and Lady Philippa approaching the group.

Again her heart beat with that suffocating violence. Morford was coming to claim his dance. She hoped that Beatrice would not notice him. If she saw Peggy dancing with any one she did not know she would be certain to ask who he was.

"I think this is our dance," said Frederick stiffly.

He towered above Peggy, the top of whose head was barely on a level with his shoulder. His great height made him conspicuous; he could not possibly escape the disapproving scrutiny of Lady Charsley. When they danced Peggy felt that he would have lifted her off her feet. Morford was by no means an accomplished dancer and he disliked dancing; his movements were not light and rhythmic as were Hugh's. But Peggy had the sense that she was yielding to his will as he bore her along; he whirled her whither he would. As yet they had not exchanged a word.

How strange to find him here in this gay throng—he who had told her he so seldom left the Rest House! She would have wondered still more had she been able to penetrate into the real motive of his presence there to-night. For Morford disliked and eschewed gaieties; he had no social instincts at all; he felt at a disadvantage among wealthy and worldly people, and he regarded almost all amusements as foolish as well as contemptible. But Aloysius Dalton had persuaded him to come, and he was the most intimate friend he possessed in the world. They had been

at Stonyhurst together. And in a lesser degree Morford loved his friend's mother, who had always and most affectionately welcomed him to her house. But this time it was not for Ally Dalton's sake that Morford had accepted the invitation. He had learned from Mary that Peggy was a sister of young Lady Charsley at Lavender—a place which was only six miles from the Daltons' little property. There was just a chance—a mere ghost of a chance, but worth trying for—that he might meet again that quiet, pale girl who had come to the Rest House on that winter night. He wished to see her again. It could lead to nothing; their worlds were as the poles apart, but the girl had aroused his interest. If it led to nothing else, another meeting might at least spoil his memory of her and give back to his heart its old and jealously guarded liberty. Not for nothing had Peggy Metcalfe offered him that intimate glimpse of the pilgrim soul in her.

"Don't let us dance," he said suddenly in an abrupt tone. "I know I dance abominably."

Without waiting for a reply he led her out of the room, and sought a secluded spot at the far end of the wide, heated corridor. For a little while—perhaps for the last time in his life—he would be alone with Peggy, and the thought pierced him like a sword. How slight and slim and fragile she was; he felt he could have lifted her with one hand. When they had been dancing she had seemed as thistledown in his hands. In the silence that followed Morford inwardly and silently but very thoroughly cursed his own folly

for venturing here to-night. She would spoil no memories that he held of her; rather she would impress them the more deeply upon his heart so that it would be a thousand times more difficult to go away and forget her.

"Well," he said at last, "how have you been getting on?"

"I have not been very happy," said Peggy, and her voice trembled a little. It was useless for her to try to talk conventionally to Morford; to her he seemed like a master, stern and harsh, but able to teach her the things she wished to know; she felt like a willing though timid pupil.

"Why have you not been happy? Isn't that very foolish of you?" he asked.

"My mother was angry when I told her about—your chapel. About my having been to Mass and Benediction. She wanted me to promise never to go inside a Catholic church. Oh, I have never mentioned it since to any one until I spoke to Lady Philippa last Sunday. And she thought I had better do nothing until I came of age."

"Do you mean you are still thinking seriously of it?" he asked, and his dark eyes swept her face.

"It seems to me that I have thought of nothing else," said Peggy; "it is like having a double life when your thoughts are fixed on something that has no connection with your present surroundings."

"Oh, you have found that, too, have you?" he said.

"Yes," said Peggy.

"I came here with the Daltons to-night," he said. "Ally Dalton is my greatest friend—the

only really intimate friend I have. We were at school together. But he doesn't often let me in for this kind of thing!" He went on speaking, for he saw that Peggy was now only controlling her emotion with great difficulty, and the knowledge stirred within him a sensation that was not wholly free from pain nor wholly removed from an insensate desire to take her in his arms and comfort her. Fool—fool—that he was! To her he was only the man who could teach her the things she so ardently desired to know; to whom she could speak freely of her wish to be a Catholic.

"I wanted to tell you," continued Peggy, in a low, troubled tone, "how much—how often I have thought of it all. You can hardly realize how ignorant I was, but until you told me I had no idea what it was that Catholics believed. I had heard of the errors of Rome, but I did not know what was meant by them. My mother always forbade any religious discussions. And now I want to be a Catholic. I have even had the strange feeling that I am one!"

Frederick Morford was silent. He knew that Peggy was not thinking of him at all; the emotion that she had betrayed at seeing him again was due only to the fact of his connection with those first strange spiritual experiences of hers.

"You can not possibly be one till you have been baptized and received," he said abruptly. "And if your mother is opposed to your becoming one, that puts it out of the question for the present. Why, you look hardly more than a child!"

"I am twenty," said Peggy simply.

Twenty? She looked scarcely more than seventeen with her slim, straight, childish figure, her clear, childlike gaze.

"You would have to wait in any case a year," he told her.

"Oh," she said impulsively, "can't you understand how difficult—how impossible it seems to me to wait even a day longer?"

Morford was silent for a moment. He looked at her as if measuring her strength, her power of endurance. There was nothing very reassuring in the result of this scrutiny. He said roughly:

"Look here. Let me give you a word of advice. You can do nothing until you have consulted a priest, and I think most priests would advise you to wait another year. Your impressions are still very fresh and vivid, but in a year they may have worn off a little—other things may have arisen to claim your attention, your interest. I have known converts who've had to suffer frightfully for their Faith—people who've been turned out of house and home penniless, and left to starve. A man can always work and earn his bread with his two hands, but *you!*" Again there was that old glance of contempt at the very softness, the luxury, of the atmosphere in which she had been born and bred, unfitting her for strenuous effort or great privations, yet now it seemed to her that the look he gave her was not wholly unmixed with a certain pity. "What could you do, Miss Metcalfe? You would most certainly starve! I'm not saying, of course, that your people would go to that extreme. I do not know them, so I

can not possibly say what they would do. I only tell you that these things *are* possible even to people who believe themselves to be good and conscientious! You might be turned out without a penny. Of course there are people who are strong enough to suffer—even as St. Paul suffered—every imaginable privation for their Faith. But you—you must forgive me, Miss Metcalfe, if I do most seriously doubt your capability of being one of them!”

He spoke with rough but passionate earnestness, and as he uttered the last sentence he looked straight into Peggy's eyes. Before that glance, which was a strange mixture of pity, disdain, and something else which she could not and dared not try to define, Peggy lowered her eyes to the ground. What if it all happened as he said? Could any starving of the body—could any cold and privation suffered by the body—fill her with that torture of privation and nostalgia from which her soul was suffering? She saw herself again in those desolate, snow-wrapped surroundings, only this time Peter was not with her; she was wandering astray and alone. And suddenly on the hill there was a beacon-light shining with vivid radiance to summon her into the very presence of God. Moved by something in his words and look that touched her to the heart, she cried, “But I am starving now!”

There was a long silence, in which Morford could not trust himself to speak. The effort to control himself was so great that it made his very features stern and grim. To a man severely trained to self-discipline, as all Catholics are in

their youth, the actual effort was no new thing to him, but it had never before been put to this kind of proof. The very youth and weakness of Peggy, the immaturity of her, were things that seemed to demand his help and sympathy. Yet he dared not offer his help. In her blind striving toward the goal upon which her whole heart and being were set he felt that she would not even have disdained the only offer of practical help he could make to her. If he had asked her then and there to be his wife he believed, with no touch of self-complacency, that she would have accepted him, simply as a means to an end. It would have been a cruel taking advantage of that youth and inexperience, and Morford banished the thought from his mind with a bitter self-contempt that he had even admitted it to temporary harborage there. Poor and obscure, he saw in her the sister of Lady Charsley, whom he had observed to-night with curious attention as the center of a brilliant little throng of worldly people. He had recognized this with something that approached agony. Yet this girl had bared her heart to him; she seemed to be unconsciously but very definitely appealing to him for a help and assistance he could not in honor give her. He was nothing to her personally; he was only the instrument flung fortuitously across her path.

"Oh, I shouldn't risk the very certain things you do possess for what may prove only a whim!" he said with a roughness that was intended to hide from her his own emotion.

"And you think it is only a whim after all I have told you?" said Peggy, hurt beyond words

at this recrudescence of his old unkind and scornful tone, that wounded her very heart.

"How can I tell? I know you so little. You and your world are strangers to me! I know nothing of your ideals and standards. But I can see at least that you are emotional—easily swayed and impressed. And then you are so pitifully young—almost a child! Even if you risked nothing by becoming a Catholic, I think almost any priest would insist upon your waiting until you were more sure of your own heart. Let me tell you it isn't easy, this Catholic life. Sometimes it is very difficult, indeed. It demands hard things of us—perpetual self-denial, perpetual submission of our own will. Sometimes we who are born to its discipline have been known to rebel. Its laws are harsher than the laws men make for themselves. Oh, I am not denying that it can give a great deal, but we are taught every moment the price we have to pay if we submit to its means for securing the ultimate salvation of our souls."

There was a pause. In the distance the strains of a fashionable, rather sentimental waltz could be faintly heard. The music seemed to Peggy to strike a false note; the very pathos of it was false. She threw back her head and looked steadily at Morford.

"Oh, I am not afraid," she said proudly. "I believe that I am prepared to sacrifice everything for the possession of those things I learned at the Rest House. I am ready to pay, although you think I am so small and weak!" Although she looked at him, Frederick felt that she was

not now thinking of him at all; his very words were hindering rather than encouraging; his doubts of her powers of endurance hurt her pride, but could not diminish her ardent resolve.

"I think we have been talking long enough," he said; "we ought to go back to the ball-room. You must have people waiting for you and I am sure that I ought to be dancing with Miss Dalton."

But Peggy seemed disinclined to move.

"Oh, do not let us go back yet," she said almost with entreaty. "I have so much to say—so many things to ask you. Please—please do not go away yet."

The vainest of men could not have read any personal preference for himself into this impulsive speech. It forced a smile from Morford—a little grim smile.

"I imagined you must be wishing to go back and dance," he said.

"Oh, I don't want to dance at all. I would far, *far* rather remain here with you—and talk!" protested Peggy very earnestly. "Although some of the things you say hurt me, it is only because I am so—so foolish. But you must not think, please, that I am not ready to pay—to pay even more than you have said—to possess—what you possess." Her voice was low and troubled; all the pride it had betrayed just now had gone from it; she was trembling as if with some unconquerable emotion.

Ah, if he could only have given it to her! If he could only dare tell her all that there was in his heart of love and pity for her! But he dared

not. She was the child of rich parents, and he knew that he could never dare approach her thus and ask her to be his wife. He would be dubbed self-seeking by all the world; would inevitably be condemned as a fortune-hunter who had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience to win her.

How could he answer her? The very simplicity of her speech gave it a meaning that was absolutely true and genuine. Words came back to him then: "*For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake.*" Very few converts escape altogether that divinely imposed suffering; in his own experience all were called upon in a greater or lesser degree to pay that grim price for the gift of their spiritual gain. And in most cases it was gladly and generously paid. He remembered the case of a foreign infidel who soon after his conversion was attacked by a painful and fatal malady, and accepted it as a just punishment for the sins of his past life, refusing to pray for his own recovery or even for a diminution of the agony it entailed. But there were also weaker souls who, when the time of trial came, could not face the temporary loss, the poverty, the exile, the ostracism from the old, beloved *milieu*, the sacrifice of friends and fortune. And it was the fear that Peggy might not have the strength to persevere in the face of perhaps cruel opposition that made him now stern in his very discouragement.

"You think that now," he said, "but I do not suppose you have ever had to do without a single thing you wanted during the whole course of

your life. We could not help seeing when you were with us how utterly different your circumstances were from ours. But if you are really in earnest," he continued, and the old harshness informed his voice as he spoke, "you can begin your preparation now in your daily life. I am not a priest and I don't profess to be devout and I hardly know how to explain what I mean—indeed, it isn't my place to say these things to you at all. But as you have asked my advice and because you seem to wish me to speak to you on this subject, I can at least say this much. Begin now to cultivate that interior submission to the Divine Will which is the very heart and root of Catholic life. Practise it in your daily life. We are taught from childhood to offer the actions, small and great, of each day to God in a spirit of humble submission. And not only our actions but our thoughts, our prayers, and our sufferings—our liberty, our memory, our understanding, and our will—all that we may have and possess! You can do that much at any rate. It is within the power of all of us at least to make the attempt. You can make yourself fit to become a Catholic and you can pray to receive the Faith and to become a member of His Church. You must forgive me if I have said too much—perhaps these things mean nothing to you."

"Do not be afraid," she said gravely; "they mean a great deal. I will try to do as you say. I will try to remember."

There was a long silence during which both figures remained curiously motionless. Frederick made no second attempt to take her back to the

ball-room. He imagined that whatever her engagements might be, she must feel little in the mood for dancing. As for himself, he could easily make his excuses to Bridget Dalton, with whom he was on friendly, almost brotherly, terms. It seemed impossible to urge Peggy to go back and join the rest of her party; she looked so spent and exhausted. They were interrupted at last by Hugh Quentin, who came hurrying toward them.

"Miss Metcalfe," he said in a cold voice, "Lady Charsley has sent me to look for you. She is ready to go, and is waiting for you."

The glance he bestowed upon Morford was the reverse of friendly; indeed, it was as insolent as he dared to make it.

Frederick and Peggy rose simultaneously. They shook hands and said good-by to each other. And as she walked away, a slight, almost drooping little figure by Hugh's side, Morford folded his arms and watched them as if he were making an effort to engrave this last memory of her forever upon his mind. He was aware that there had been something almost openly hostile in Hugh's manner as he bowed stiffly to him in farewell. It seemed to him an expression that might be symbolic of all Peggy's world toward himself and all that he stood for. He felt in that moment as if he were parting from her for ever, and the thought held for him all the anguish of sharp physical suffering.

"My dear Peggy! Where on earth have you been?" Beatrice's manner was irritable from sheer anxiety; she did not even try to control it,

although Lady Philippa was standing there and could hear every word she said. Lady Trowhaven and her daughter were also present, but they were so busy putting on their cloaks that they seemed to have no attention for anything else.

"Did you have any supper?" inquired Beatrice, as her sister did not speak, but stood looking at her in a confused and bewildered way.

Peggy had not given a thought to supper. She had not been aware that her sister never stayed late at a dance. Beatrice considered three hours quite sufficient for any one, and if the men of the party wished to remain longer, they could always do so and a motor was left at their disposal.

"No—but I didn't want any," said Peggy, looking at her sister with strangely shining eyes. She took her white fur coat from the hands of the attendant. "I am tired, Beatrice. I shall be glad to go."

"I only saw you dancing twice—quite early in the evening. But it can not be true—what Hugh suggested to me—that you were still with this Mr. Morford when he went to look for you?" said Beatrice in an undertone that held no little anger.

Peggy had eluded her vigilance; she had slipped away without a word, accomplishing exactly all that they had intended to avoid for her. Beatrice was perfectly aware that Mr. Morford was the hero of that Somersetshire escapade. She dreaded his influence upon Peggy.

"Yes; I was with him. I am sorry, Beatrice.

I did not know how late it was or that we had been sitting there such a long time."

It seemed to her that she had only spent a few minutes in the company of Frederick Morford; she had not asked him one-tenth of the things she had wished to.

"It is very bad form to sit out the whole evening like that. You ought to have known better, Peggy. Of course, one can not expect any delicacy of understanding from such men as that; but he should have known better than to make you so conspicuous!"

The implied insult in her speech made Peggy flush with a momentary sensation of anger. But it passed and she said very quietly: "He did wish to take me back to the ball-room, but I begged him to remain."

"You begged him to remain?" cried Beatrice. Her other guests had gone into the entrance-hall and were waiting for her there, thinking she had something of importance to say to Peggy. "It is not possible, Peggy, that you could have flung yourself at his head like that!"

Peggy colored all over her face and neck. Beatrice's words were dreadful, and it seemed to her almost as if the touch of a soiling hand had actually smirched her.

"Oh, Beatrice!" she said. "Mr. Morford would never think a thing like that of me. He knows so well why I wanted to speak to him—why I wanted to remain there instead of dancing!"

Beatrice's hard words had wrung this timid confession from her. Peggy felt she would rather

that her sister should know the real truth than that she should put such a false interpretation upon her action.

Beatrice bestowed upon her a searching glance. It seemed to her that Peggy was changed this evening; she looked so vivid and alive—she who was generally so quiet and colorless. And she was almost beautiful with that delicate flush still lingering in her face and her eyes as bright as lamps. She showed traces of excitement and of emotion. Was she—could she be—in love with this man? Were her leanings toward Catholicism inspired by an incipient and utterly undesirable love-affair? If so, the sooner her engagement to Hugh Quentin was announced the better! Beatrice moved toward the door.

When they were all in the motor, traveling home at top speed, Beatrice said in a disapproving voice:

"I couldn't persuade Violet Hawthorn to come!"

"Oh, Rollo'll look after her," said Hugh, who had sulkily announced his intention of accompanying them home. His evening had been thoroughly spoiled and he was quite out of temper.

"It is a great pity that she *will* get herself talked about," said Lady Trowhaven, censoriously, glancing at her daughter to see if the censure had penetrated to that meek blonde head.

"People will only think they're really engaged at last," said Hugh.

Peggy sat silently on a small seat beside him. All through the drive home she did not once speak. Beatrice's words had aroused within her

a strange excitement that expressed itself in the hard beating of her heart, the trembling of her limbs. Only she was not thinking now of Beatrice nor of her displeasure; her thoughts were entirely concentrated upon that conversation with Frederick Morford. It had been, as she knew, hardly purchased. Beatrice's suspicions were aroused and she would certainly relate the episode to Lady Metcalfe.

CHAPTER IX

PEGGY passed a restless and almost sleepless night, and she did not know whether she felt happy or the reverse in those hours she spent lying awake. Her brain was so active that she almost felt as if something were moving about inside her head, confusing her thoughts. It never occurred to her to analyze her own feeling for Morford nor to ask herself why this sudden appearance had evoked within her a feeling of fear as well as of joy. Apart from his Faith—and indeed apart from that he hardly mattered to her at all—she was not even sure that she liked him. He was not gentle and agreeable and suave of speech like Hugh Quentin. There was something harsh and dominating about him, something fiercely scornful. Always he suggested that disdainful contempt of weakness. If Peggy had examined her own heart, as an older woman would probably have done, she would perhaps have discovered something of the truth. The man was dangerously fascinating because he could attract even when he most repelled. Peggy, looking upon him only in his capacity as a teacher, was conscious of that rough mastery that held her like a vise, and made her obedient, timid, and submissive to a point that astonished herself. But with it all there had been something in his manner to-night that repudiated all personal responsibility in the affairs of her soul, a rejection of any participation in it that was tantamount to a refusal to be mixed up in the matter

of her possible conversion. It was this attitude that had wounded Peggy. He had spoken to her as if he were doing so only at her request but against his own will and against his better judgment. And she—she felt that he had in some sense been sent to help her, and it wounded her to feel that he rejected any responsibility in the matter. And he had shown so plainly through all his speech that he did not believe her capable of any sacrifice, of any forfeiting of the purple and fine linen of her present soft life. She was made in his eyes for ease and calm, not for strife and storms.

Peggy, as she lay in bed, feeling little inclined for the toast, butter and marmalade and steaming hot coffee that had been brought up to her on a tray, could not help feeling that she was in disgrace with Beatrice. Those few words that had passed between them last night had shown her that Beatrice had felt ashamed at her conduct. And Hugh was angry and perhaps a little jealous that she had not danced with him again, although she had promised to do so.

Perhaps Beatrice would send her home in disgrace. While she remained at Lavender there was always a chance that she might see Morford again. The future looked very dark. Peggy felt that it would be less of a trial to be a martyr than to be treated as a naughty, rebellious child; and it was in the latter guise she would certainly have to appear before the ultimate domestic tribunal at Mildon if Beatrice sent her home. Then there would perhaps be that threatened interview with her father—a course that had all

her life been adopted when it was found necessary to bring Peggy to reason. Sir John had always left the management of his daughters to his wife unless she called upon him for assistance, and except in Peggy's case she had never done this. His measures, if drastic, had been successful and had contributed sensibly to the subdual of Peggy when she was a little child, and the fear of him, inherited from those days, had never left her.

Peggy drank some coffee; she hoped that it would steady her nerves. She was certainly overtired as a result of last night's dissipation, and consequently she was unnerved and inclined to look upon the dark side of things. Suddenly a knock at the door caused her to set down her cup with a startled, guilty air; she said, "Come in," and the door opened to admit Lady Philippa.

Lady Philippa had rooms not far from Peggy's own and she had come to her as yet not fully dressed, for she wore a dainty wrapper of pale pink silk and her hair was carelessly arranged under a little cap of pink silk and lace with a diminutive wreath of roses. She looked amazingly pretty, and as fresh and rosy as a baby newly emerged from slumber.

"My dear child," she said as she came across the room to Peggy's bedside, "you quite alarmed me last night."

"Did I?" said Peggy. She did not feel inclined to discuss last night's happenings in an intimate way with Lady Philippa; she was not sure how far she could trust her not to tell Beatrice.

"Beatrice was awfully put out. You weren't very discreet, you know. I hope there's no secret understanding between you and Frederick Morford?"

"Oh, Lady Philippa; what do you mean? Of course there isn't! Why, I hardly know him—we are almost strangers." Her eyes filled with tears at this fresh evidence of misinterpretation and misunderstanding of her interview with Morford.

But her scarlet, confused face only aroused Lady Philippa's suspicions anew.

"Is he trying to persuade you to become a Catholic? But I'm sure I needn't ask you that. Frederick is very prudent and you are so young. He is quite well aware what people would say if he attempted to do such a thing!"

"I was asking him about it," said Peggy in a low voice. "You see, he knows everything—everything. He has been a Catholic all his life. I was only making the most of my opportunity of talking to him—perhaps I shall never have another! I am sure that he does not want me to be a Catholic—he thinks I am not strong enough to persevere."

"He can not have fallen in love with you?" said Philippa, looking so hard at the lovely, childish little face with its dark framing hair that it brought a fresh crop of blushes to the pale cheeks. "He could not be such a fool as that when he has not got a penny piece! They are most awfully hard up—Ally Dalton says they really have not always enough to eat, and his sister works harder than a servant. Your father would never allow

it apart from the religious difficulty. You must not let yourself think about Frederick!"

"I am not thinking of him like that," said Peggy miserably; "I know how poor they are and that he had to leave the army, and perhaps that has made him harsh and embittered. And of course he is not in love with me. I do not think he likes me at all. He has only seen me twice and he speaks to me as if I were a child. Not even kindly, but harshly and roughly! He is not at all kind and agreeable as Peter's friends generally are, but he *knows*—he can teach me. And I want to learn."

She sat up in bed, clasping her hands together. In the thin, cobwebby nightdress cut low at the throat and short-sleeved she looked more than ever like a child.

"And so he is against your becoming a Catholic?" said Lady Philippa.

"Yes, as far as I can tell. He says almost any priest would make me wait, and that it is hard and difficult and that the convert always has to pay. He thinks I am too weak—that I should not persevere."

Although she was a devout Catholic, Lady Philippa was a thorough woman of the world, and she wondered a little how Peggy Metcalfe had managed to arrive at the age of twenty and possess so little experience of the world and of men. She seemed unaware that it could be possible for any other interpretation to be placed upon her very prolonged interview with Frederick Morford last night. They had disappeared from the ball-room for a couple of hours, a thing

which people do not generally do unless they are at any rate deeply interested in each other. Peggy must have known that her other partners were waiting for her and perhaps wondering where she was, but it had not even occurred to her that she was exciting remark or stimulating criticism.

"I think, my dear," Philippa said lightly, "that it would perhaps be more discreet if you were to sit at the feet of a female Gamaliel in the future. A woman will be able to teach you all you wish to know on the subject of religion quite as well as Frederick Morford. I have never heard that he was an exceptionally devout man, and you must forgive me if I think you have at least misinterpreted *his* view of the situation!"

Beatrice had spoken rather openly to Philippa about Peggy last night and had set her on her guard. Peggy, she averred, was full of whims and fancies, was inclined to be nervous and hysterical, and had always been rebellious against authority. Peggy's bad "nursery-character" had stuck to her like a gigantic burr.

"You are very young, you know," continued Philippa Sacheverell, "and, although you may not be aware of it, you are letting this man influence you. He has a powerful personality, and of course you are a baby in his hands. I advise you to be more careful in the future. You can not play with a man like Frederick Morford—you will only burn your own fingers and wake up one day to find that you are hopelessly in love with him!"

Peggy was just about to make an indignant

rejoinder when the door opened and Beatrice came into the room accompanied by her two elder children. She held one by each hand and advanced toward the bed smiling and looking very happy and contented. Beatrice was always seen at her best with her children; she was passionately attached to them and was never so happy as when there was a new baby to demand her care. It was undoubtedly this maternal quality which had made her marriage such a success. Her pride in her children was almost arrogant.

She stooped down and kissed Peggy and then Ethne and Jack followed their mother's example.

"Dood morning, Auntie Peggy," they both said in chorus.

"Peggy, I'm going to be a hard-hearted sister and send you home to-day. Diana's coming and I want her to have these rooms," said Lady Charsley.

She had had a long talk with her husband and he had agreed with her that if there was to be any trouble about Peggy and the violent fancy she had taken for that queer-looking man, it was better that the venue of it should be elsewhere than at Lavender. He at least did not wish to incur any blame from Sir John, whose behavior as a father-in-law was all that the most extravagant and impecunious son-in-law could desire!

"Very well, Beatrice," said Peggy.

Lady Philippa, thinking the sisters had something more to say to each other, discreetly left the room, bestowing a parting nod and smile upon poor Peggy.

"What time do you want me to go?" asked Peggy with a lump in her throat.

"Directly after luncheon. Hugh's going then and you can travel by the same train. It'll be more convenient, as the car can wait at the station for Diana."

Beatrice spoke in a tone of authority and decision; she looked this morning a thoroughly capable and competent young matron.

"Why is Auntie Peggy going away?" inquired Ethne. "Has she been naughty?" She detected with the unerring instinct of childhood that there was displeasure in her mother's tone and that for some mysterious reason she was "cross with Auntie Peggy." And in Ethne's limited experience people were only cross with you when you had been naughty. "What's oo done, Auntie Peggy?" she further inquired, as no answer seemed to be immediately forthcoming.

"I am sorry I can't undertake the responsibility of you any more," said Beatrice, in a light, cutting tone; "you know there are two or three dances still to come and I had meant to take you to them all. But I see it would never do. It is not my place to say anything to you about last night; but I'm older than you, Peggy, and I'm married and have had more experience. You did behave outrageously last night. I don't know anything about this Morford man, but if you fall into the clutches of any fortune-hunter while you are under my care, mother will never forgive me. She gave me such strict injunctions about you and I have the feeling that you have deliberately defied me. I'm quite sure religion hasn't

anything to do with it. Religion says we are to honor and obey our parents. If you say you want to be a Roman Catholic we shall all know it's because you want to show us how rebellious and undutiful you can be!"

"Mummy, why's oo scolding Auntie Peggy?" inquired Ethne with shrill persistence. Little Jack, however, hung his head and looked as if he were about to cry. He always cried if Ethne were scolded; he was so sorry for her.

"Is oo going to *whip* Auntie Peggy?" asked Ethne, who had been occasionally informed as a deterrent that very naughty and disobedient girls were sometimes called upon to endure this painful punishment.

"Run away to nurse, darling, and take Jack with you," said Beatrice.

When the children had gone Peggy lost control of herself and began to cry. She felt tired and miserable and she dreaded the thought of returning home. She would be in dire disgrace when Lady Metcalfe learned the reason of her premature departure from Lavender. There would be a scene, and Peggy hated and feared scenes.

"I have wired to mother that you are coming and I have written a long letter besides," said Beatrice.

"How cruel you are, Beatrice!" sobbed Peggy.

"I am acting only for your good. You are very young and very foolish. You must be saved from yourself. Look facts in the face, Peggy. You would never be allowed to marry this man, apart from the fact of his being a Roman Cath-

olic, which is like a red rag to a bull to father. The sooner you give up thinking of him the better. In any case I do not mean to run any risks—you shall not have the chance of meeting him again while you are under my roof.”

When Beatrice had left her alone Peggy lay back on the pillow and her tears flowed unrestrained. She was too tired and too wretched to attempt to control them and her sobs became every moment louder and more violent. At last, realizing that her maid would soon want to come and pack, she rose and sponged her face with cold water and put eau-de-cologne on her swollen eyelids. It made them smart and sting, but it did not improve their disfigured appearance. By the time Peggy was dressed she perceived that she was still quite unpresentable and that she could not possibly appear downstairs at luncheon. This would annoy Beatrice, who probably would not wish her guests to know that there was anything sudden or unusual about Peggy's departure.

Peggy had her luncheon in her room, and when Beatrice came up to see her she felt a little sorry for her and wished that she had kept her in bed instead of sending her home. It was a long journey and the day was very cold, and Peggy looked unfit to bear any unusual fatigue. The girl really looked quite ill, and her face, though now calm, still bore the traces of that violent weeping. However, there was only time for her to take a very hurried farewell of her fellow-guests as she passed through the hall, and some of them were not even there to witness her departure. Only

Philippa Sacheverell came up and kissed her kindly and whispered, "Cheer up, my dear, we've all had to go through these things!" And Henry Sacheverell shook her hand and bade her adieu in his grave, courtly way.

Hugh sat outside with the chauffeur and Peggy sat inside the car with her maid. It seemed a very long way to the station, yet she felt sorry when they arrived, and positively dreaded lest Hugh Quentin should insist upon traveling with her. She so wanted to be alone to think out things a little.

She was standing on the platform when Hugh came up to her. Her maid had gone to see after the luggage and Peggy was alone. But he only asked her if she wanted anything to read, and then went off to the book-stall to buy some papers for himself. Peggy felt embarrassed at seeing him thus again. She had been so crushed by Beatrice, who had somehow made her feel that she had behaved in an outrageous and unladylike way that she felt she could hardly hold up her head and meet his eyes. She was ashamed because her own action had been so misconstrued. Her pleasure in seeing Morford again had been so completely misinterpreted by Beatrice and Hugh and even by Lady Philippa, who ought at least to have understood. And even Morford had not been very kind. He had snubbed her, scorned her, tried in every way to discourage her and diminish her enthusiasm. There had been no comfort anywhere, and she was being sent home in disgrace, just like an unmanageable child. The worst of it all was that

she had a secret dread that Morford had also misread that emotion which his sudden appearance had evoked.

As the train came in Hugh approached her again with a stern, unsmiling face. He opened the door of a first-class carriage and helped Peggy into it. Her maid followed with her bag and rug. Silently Hugh helped to install her, and his solicitude for her comfort, despite his evident displeasure, touched her a little and made her feel grateful to him. Then he raised his hat and walked away down the corridor. Obviously he had no intention of traveling with her. She saw nothing more of him until they reached London, when in the same speechless way he saw her into a taxi and waited while her luggage was being brought.

Then he said: "Good-by, Miss Metcalfe. Say all sorts of things to Peter for me, please," but he did not smile at all and took her hand for a second, only to drop it abruptly. His eyes softened involuntarily, however, as he looked at her. What had happened to make the girl look so wan and white to-day? Last night she had seemed to him such a radiant, vivid, almost troubling vision, utterly out of his reach. To-day she resembled a sad child pleading inarticulately to be comforted. What had this strange man said to her? Were they in love with each other with that swift, sudden love which sometimes springs up between two people of widely different upbringing and position, as if to verify the old belief that Love is a god, recking nothing of worldly standards? He knew enough of the

Metcalfes to know they would never for a moment tolerate such a match as that for one of their daughters.

"Good-by," said Peggy, holding out a little listless hand. Even through her glove the touch of it chilled him.

CHAPTER X

LADY METCALFE was not without the wisdom which the placid of this world possess. She always avoided anything disagreeable in the shape of a scene if she could. So, although she was astonished at Beatrice's telegram announcing Peggy's return and felt sure that something really grave must have happened to necessitate such sharp and swift measures, she made no comment upon it whatever when she saw her daughter. But she took away the letter which was presented to her by the maid and proceeded to her own room to read it in private.

Her curiosity was thoroughly stimulated, and the only interpretation she had been able to place upon the untoward incident was the fear that Hugh might have been a little premature in the disclosure of his intentions, and had already asked Peggy to be his wife and that she had refused him—which was unfortunately only too probable. But in this case it was surely Hugh who should have left Lavender, not Peggy.

Beatrice's letter, however, threw a very abundant and detailed light upon the situation. It gave a singularly full and exact account of all that had happened at the Hunt Ball, and of the unexpected as well as unfortunate appearance of Morford among Mrs. Dalton's guests. "She always has Noah's Ark parties," wrote Beatrice, "but I never remember to have seen quite such a menagerie before. If it were not for Ally, who

is a good sort, I really think I should drop the woman's acquaintance." Beatrice went on to say that she believed Peggy had fallen in love with Morford during her visit to the Rest House. He was a very rough diamond indeed—supposing that he were a diamond at all, which Beatrice plainly doubted—a boor of a man, slovenly in appearance, but not bad looking in a great, dark way. His people were extremely poor—Philly Sacheverell, who had heard a good deal about them from the Daltons, said they sometimes even hadn't enough to eat. He and Ally Dalton were said to be intimate friends, and Mrs. Dalton had told Philly that she liked him very much; he had borne so many trials with such perfect fortitude. Beatrice added by way of parenthesis, "I have often observed that Roman Catholics who are so opposed to Socialism are often far more democratic at heart than we are. It is often enough just to be a Catholic to obtain admittance to their most exclusive circles." She went on to describe Peggy's prolonged disappearance in the company of Morford, and Hugh's ill-concealed annoyance and jealousy. "Of course she may be for all we know a thorough-paced little flirt, and have done it only to lead Hugh on by tormenting him and arousing his jealousy. But when a man sees a girl carrying on with a nobody it is much more likely to disgust and drive him away altogether. Hugh spoke to me very plainly about Peggy before the ball and he admitted that he was in love with her, but he feared that she was too much of a child at present to know her own heart. Now I

am afraid that she has deliberately destroyed that impression (which I did my best to encourage) by her very silly behavior. She went as white as a sheet when Morford came up to her. She looked positively agitated! It is a thousand pities that such a silly, impressionable girl as Peggy should have been snowed up in that miserable farm-house."

Yes, it was a thousand pities, but it was too late to undo it now. The question was how to remove, efface, obliterate the unfortunate impressions there engraved upon Peggy's plastic mind. To be severe with obstinate persons often had the undesired effect of making them cling with even greater determination to the error of their ways. After an hour's reflection Lady Metcalfe resolved to be tactful and silent, and conceal her displeasure from Peggy. She was even inclined to think that Beatrice had behaved in rather a high-handed way by sending Peggy home, and washing her hands—so to speak—of her. But she felt that it was not at all the moment to scold Peggy. It might even do more harm than good. Girls were so apt to consider themselves ill-used when their wise elders stepped in to nip an incipient love affair in the bud. Besides, it was almost a relief to her to know that Beatrice's view held the consoling belief that Peggy was much less attracted to the religion itself than to the man who had probably used all his influence to set it before her in an attractive light. For, knowing nothing herself of Morford, she had really imagined that when Peggy first returned from the Rest House it was the

Roman Catholic religion and that alone which had so powerfully fascinated her. It was a religion that did sometimes make this kind of instant and violent appeal to the young, susceptible, and emotional mind; and she was genuinely afraid that this had been its effect upon Peggy. But that there should be a young man concerned in the affair—a young man, too, who was capable of producing a visible emotion in Peggy—that was quite another matter, and placed things at once on a more normal, easy-to-deal-with basis. It was indeed a case with which Lady Metcalfe from past experience felt perfectly competent to cope. Had she not dealt skilfully and most successfully—as she now proudly reflected—with the affair of her second daughter Beatrice? And who could possibly be more grateful, more appreciative of that timely interference than Beatrice herself after six years of happy marriage? This thought came into Lady Metcalfe's mind with an almost sentimental self-approbation. It is true that Beatrice's young and ardent lover had not been an obscure, ineligible Catholic nobody like this Morford. He had been boyishly young and not at all well off according to Metcalfe standards, but he had been of excellent birth and extraordinarily handsome and agreeable. His mother, too, had spoken with tactless contempt of the Metcalfes, and this had reached Lady Metcalfe's ears. Mrs. Vernon had actually (and most strangely) objected to a match between her only son and Beatrice, although the latter's money would have paid off all the mortgages on the property and given the young couple

something substantial in hand. Sir John had never pined to pay off the mortgages on the Vernon property, and besides Lord Charsley had already made his intentions very clear to him. The admirable parents had not been without misgiving and anxiety about Beatrice herself. They knew she was in love with Claude and that heedless of mortgages or settlements, the pair had plighted their troth to each other. Nothing was said, but a silent, subtle, and relentless pressure had been applied to poor Beatrice. Young Claude Vernon had been sent away abroad as an unpaid *attaché* to a distant embassy, and Beatrice was not allowed to communicate with him. At the end of two months the brilliant double wedding took place.

The general who has once been successful in bringing off a decisive victory in the face of considerable odds has less fear of defeat in the future. It was so with Lady Metcalfe. She braced her mind to the task. It may be believed that she felt a certain pleasurable excitement in the prospect of the conflict. She had outmaneuvered Love in the case of Beatrice, and she felt able if not eager to deal in precisely the same way with Peggy. History repeats itself, especially in families where possibly the same predispositions may not improbably be manifested by the various members. But in any case it would be far easier to deal with this affair of Peggy's, for Morford was not a near neighbor, as Claude had been. Claude had been, so to speak, a present and imminent danger, but Morford lived far away in the heart of Somersetshire

in a wretched ramshackle old farmhouse miles from anywhere. He was somebody's agent. Beatrice had contrived to amass a surprising amount of information about the young man, for she had questioned Lady Philippa very closely on the subject.

There was, therefore, only one plan to be pursued, to treat the whole affair with silent contempt and to keep a vigilant eye upon Peggy herself. Time and parting would surely efface what was on the face of it so undesirable. After all, the girl was only twenty, and after a few months of the kind of pressure that had been applied so successfully to Beatrice there was no doubt that Peggy would marry Hugh without demur. Lady Metcalfe prided herself upon the fact that her "dear girls," as she called them, made such excellent wives and mothers; and although Peggy had shown herself hitherto so deplorably different, there was no doubt that in the end she would conform to the high standard of social and domestic success set before her by her two sisters.

Lady Metcalfe also decided that the affair should not be mentioned to Sir John. He was worried about Peter, who, though fairly diligent, was showing less aptitude for business than he could have imagined possible. Already there had been one or two angry scenes between father and son. It would not be wise to give Sir John any further reason for annoyance. And he had a singularly violent prejudice against Catholics—the more violent, perhaps, because he had himself been brought up as a Wesleyan. These

prejudices could hardly be ascribed to his own fault, for his father had held them and had inculcated them into him at an early age. Lady Metcalfe by no means shared the violence of his views, but she had no Catholics among her acquaintance and regarded them rather as a race apart who perhaps deserved pity for their blindness and ignorance. If they could only have a single glimpse, she felt, of the Protestant religion it would surely suffice to make them renounce the dangerous superstitions of their own errors. Only it was so difficult to give them that glimpse—they were so hedged in by the bitter implacability of the priests, who ruled their lives with such remorseless and ceaseless vigilance!

Knowing exactly her husband's views on this important subject, she made no mention of the episode to him. To mention Morford one must necessarily make mention also of his religion, which would at once and inevitably arouse Sir John's anger. It would make things hard for Peggy at this stage, when probably she was feeling a little sore at heart at this arbitrary termination of the affair. Violent opposition and sharp coercive measures had never been successful in conquering Peggy's tacit obstinacy, even when she was a child, and they had been employed by no means infrequently. One forced her into submission, but one felt all the time that that fine spirit of hers was unconquered and ready at the first opportunity to reassert itself. Peggy must not be made to feel that every one was against her. It might only awaken a morbid sense of being misunderstood and thwarted.

Time and a silent, loving surveillance—herein lay Lady Metcalfe's best equipment for the little struggle that lay in front of her. It would end, she felt confident, in a second triumph scarcely less brilliant and permanent than that achieved in the case of Beatrice.

"I am quite sorry that you met this Mr. Morford again," she said to Peggy in the drawing-room that evening. "He seems a rather dreadful person from Beatrice's description."

"I do not find him dreadful," said Peggy, steadying her voice. "Of course he is not like the men who come here. He is poor and his clothes are shabby. He can not help that."

Lady Metcalfe thought it wiser not to pursue the subject.

Presently Peggy looked up from her work and said:

"I do not see what right Beatrice has to despise him. He was staying with the Daltons, and the Daltons are friends of hers. And he knew Lady Philippa Sacheverell—I saw them dancing together."

Her face flushed a little with indignation.

"Beatrice knows my wishes so perfectly, dear Peggy," said Lady Metcalfe in her placid way, "and I can trust her so perfectly not to let you be carried away by any unwise youthful enthusiasm. She was quite right to send you out of harm's way—from any recurrence of this man's unwelcome attentions. He ought to have seen how very young and inexperienced you were, and not taken advantage of these things to render you so conspicuous. I am not

going to say any more about it now, Peggy dear. You have had your lesson and I dare say you are feeling a little sore about it. It is all over now and you must look upon the chapter as quite closed. I advise you not to think about it any more. It was unfortunate that the adventure should have happened to you, for you have never had the same poise as dear Diana and Beatrice. But it is all over and you are never likely to see these odd people again." She spoke in a brisk, bright tone that was intended to brace.

But Peggy only went on with her work in silence. She was wondering if it were quite true that she would never be allowed to see Morford again. There were so many things she still wished to ask him, and although he was rough and harsh and even impatient with her, his explanations, when he did give them, were clear and sank deeply and permanently into her memory. Yes, even when he had set down those hard rules for her daily life she had accepted them as part of the teaching he was able to give. She realized perfectly that these were not individual opinions, the views of one particular man; they all formed part of that system to which Morford belonged and in conformity to which he had been educated and trained. The man did not count at all, and Peggy wondered why Beatrice should be so eager to denigrate him. It was what he had to say and teach that mattered so much. He was the messenger sent to show her how best to become a Catholic. Surely some day he would come back and help to finish the work he had begun.

CHAPTER XI

UNKNOWN to his wife, Sir John Metcalfe's mind had been greatly preoccupied of late with thoughts and plans for the future of his youngest daughter.

All his other children were now provided for and installed, so to speak, in their respective vocations. Peter was employed at the office, and though he showed no aptitude at all for the work, he was diligent and persevering. Vivian was in a cavalry regiment in India, where he was rapidly becoming renowned as a polo player. He was gay and handsome and popular—perhaps, indeed, he was the handsomest of the Metcalfe children—but his extravagance was appalling, and in this respect he showed no sign of amendment. There really only remained Peggy to be considered. One day he counted up the years that had elapsed since this, their last child, was born, and he discovered with some dismay that they amounted to twenty. Diana was just twenty when she married, but she had been engaged for nearly a year to Lord Maddinard because his father preferred that he should wait to marry till he came of age. Beatrice was only nineteen, but her husband was well on in his thirties. There had been no need for them to wait; indeed, there had been every reason why the marriage should take place without delay. But so far no suitor for Peggy had presented himself. Sir John mentally reviewed the neighborhood of

Mildon, but he could find no one at all suitable. The same survey was then applied to Peter's friends who sometimes stayed at Mildon, but he felt that even among these there was no one of sufficient consequence. He wondered why his wife had been so dilatory in the matter, for it was high time that Peggy should marry.

Sir John was fond of Peggy—fonder perhaps than his wife was. It seemed only the other day that Lady Metcalfe had called her troublesome, and had brought her down to him for correction. She was the only one of the girls who had ever been brought to him for punishment, and he imagined that Peggy must have been flagrantly naughty to induce his wife to adopt this unusual course. She was no longer troublesome—at least as far as Sir John knew, for he had been told nothing of the Morford affair. She seemed to be a sweet, docile girl, silent, more serious than her sisters had been, but gentle in her ways. Peggy must certainly find a husband. She was an attractive little thing, not a beauty, of course, like her sisters, but very charming looking. Peter was very fond of her.

Some months had passed since the episode of the Hunt Ball when Sir John first addressed his wife upon the subject of Peggy's future. Easter was approaching, and at Easter the Metcalfes generally had the house full, prior to their departure for London. Lady Metcalfe spent fewer weeks in London now than she had formerly done. She did not care about it herself and Peggy was by no means enthusiastic and greatly preferred Mildon.

"I should like," he said slowly one evening, when he was alone with his wife, "to see our little Peggy as well and happily married as her sisters."

He had looked up quite suddenly from his newspaper when he made this speech. Lady Metcalfe was quite startled for the moment. Then she said quickly:

"Oh, Peggy will marry Sir Hugh Quentin—that friend of Peter's. He saw her last summer at Oxford and they met again at Beatrice's in the winter. He is in love with her—he spoke quite definitely to Beatrice."

"Then why," said Sir John, laying down his newspaper with a frown, "has nothing been settled? Peggy is twenty—she is as old as Diana was when she married. I will not have young men who can not make up their minds hanging about my daughters!"

"Oh, I am sure Hugh has made up his mind," replied Lady Metcalfe uneasily, "but I wasn't sure about Peggy. I was afraid that if he spoke too soon she might refuse him. Peggy is different from the others, and she has always been troublesome," she added, falling back upon the old formula.

"Does Peggy know of this man's intentions?" inquired Sir John, who began to consider that he had been kept unnecessarily in the dark about the whole affair.

"I am not at all sure that she does," said Lady Metcalfe. "I have never spoken to her about it. I do not know if Beatrice has. To tell you

the truth, I hoped that Peggy might return engaged from Lavender last January."

"I think you had better ask him here for Easter," said Sir John, who knew all about Sir Hugh Quentin, although he had never seen him. "That will give them the chance to make up their minds. They could be married as soon as they like—there is nothing for them to wait for. I shall give Peggy just what I gave her sisters if she makes a marriage that meets with my approval. Perhaps you had better speak to her about it."

"I think it would be better to leave the speaking to Hugh," said Lady Metcalfe. "I will write and ask him to come. They haven't seen each other for nearly three months—they have had plenty of time to think it over." She added with a sigh, "You must not count too much upon Peggy, John. If she takes it into her head that she won't marry Hugh I am sure we shall never be able to persuade her to. She is not like Beatrice."

"I think you'd better sound her first, then, my dear. See if she likes the idea of his coming. I don't want to force the girl against her will, and at the same time we can't ask him here just to be flouted!"

He went back to his newspaper and Lady Metcalfe went on with the novel she was reading. Yes; that would be an excellent idea. It would not be necessary to say a great deal to Peggy, but she would tell her that they were thinking of asking Hugh and watch the effect upon her.

Surely in the last three months spent quietly at Mildon Peggy had had ample time to meditate upon her folly, and to eliminate the image of Morford from her mind.

She said carelessly to Peggy on the following morning:

"Your father wishes Sir Hugh Quentin to be asked here for Easter. I hope you do not object to his coming, Peggy?"

It was warily put, although Lady Metcalfe had no intention of setting a trap. A very faint flush came over Peggy's face as she answered, "Oh, no; I shall be very glad to see him. Peter will like to have him."

Nothing could have been more perfect, more delicately maidenly. Lady Metcalfe looked approvingly at her daughter. But she said nothing more. If Peggy had no objection one could regard the whole affair as settled.

Quentin accepted the invitation and appeared on the day appointed—the Saturday before Easter. He had been restless and unhappy during these past months, and though he had tried to divert himself at Monte Carlo, the attempt had not been very successful. Peggy was constantly in his thoughts. But the remembrance of those days at Lavender gave him, it must be said, very little food for hope.

The invitation to Mildon, received a few days after his return to town, came like a bolt from the blue. He had never stayed there before and Lady Metcalfe's note was charmingly worded. Hugh was determined that nothing should prevent him from asking Peggy to be his wife. He

knew he had the approbation of Lady Charsley and he believed now that Peggy's parents shared that approval. He was in good spirits when he arrived at Mildon, and had something of the arrogance of a man who is certain that he is going forth to conquer.

There was a dinner party on the Saturday night and some of the more prominent of their country neighbors had been invited. Lady Metcalfe had shown of late a disposition to fuss about Peggy's clothes; she had accompanied her to town on several shopping expeditions, and had chosen most of her things herself. Peggy never, she affirmed, had any ideas about clothes and would have gone on cheerfully wearing the same old things from year to year.

She came up to her daughter's room that evening when it was time to dress for dinner and said:

"I want you to wear that new pink dress of yours, Peggy. And tell Valérie to part your hair on one side. I should like you to look as much like Deirdre O'Mara as possible."

Peggy flushed. She had seen Deirdre O'Mara in some of her most celebrated parts, and she had felt half attracted and half repelled by the Celtic witchery of the woman who disdained all theatrical make-up and refused to allow her strange white face to be reddened or whitened by grease paint.

"Why do you want me to look like Deirdre O'Mara?" she said in a low, constrained tone.

Lady Metcalfe paused. She felt she could not say, "Because Sir Hugh said you were like her

and he used to admire her very much"—it might arouse Peggy's suspicions and obstinacy. That was the worst of Peggy—one never felt sure of her. One could not count upon her loyal submission. To either of her elder daughters Lady Metcalfe would certainly have given her real reason and perhaps added a tentative word about her own hopes, counting, too, upon a filial co-operation. But there was something in the crude bluntness of Peggy's question that seemed to put her mother in the wrong—almost as if she believed that she were intriguing against her. Her words suggested a reproach. How absurd when she had neither wish nor thought except for her daughter's welfare!

"You are very like her," she said cautiously; "people have noticed it. It is always a good thing for a girl to be thought like a celebrated beauty—people begin to admire her at once. Deirdre O'Mara is considered a very beautiful woman."

"I do not want to be admired," said Peggy slowly. She was standing on the hearth-rug looking rather intently at the flames as they played and leaped about a huge oak log. There were blue flames as well as red and orange; the effect was pretty.

"That is nonsense," said Lady Metcalfe briskly; "all girls like to be admired by the right man."

Peggy felt a little uneasy when her mother had left the room. The episode, sufficiently insignificant in itself, had aroused a whole army of disquieting suspicions—little, teasing, worrying things that resembled a swarm of mosquitoes.

Suddenly she remembered with a flash almost of illumination a chance word she had once heard spoken about Hugh Quentin. It was at Oxford last summer, and some woman had remarked to Diana, "Poor Hugh seems quite to have got over his infatuation for Deirdre O'Mara at last!" She had never thought about it again, but something in her mother's words had awakened the dormant memory. It suddenly became apparent to Peggy why Hugh had been invited to Mildon. It was not on Peter's account at all—it was on her own. The scales fell suddenly from Peggy's eyes, and her heart began to beat so violently that it almost suffocated her. She saw the first edge of the net into which in days gone by Diana and Beatrice had both stepped, one cheerfully and the other reluctantly, and she wondered whether she would dare refuse when it came to her turn. She had not perceived its approach; it had revealed itself suddenly, and she felt for the moment stupefied at the sight. She sat down by the fire and tried to arrange her chaotic thoughts a little.

Peter had conformed to his parents' wishes, and she alone knew perhaps with what interior rebellion he had done so. But it was a chain from which he could free himself at any time without sin. Marriage was a very different thing—marriage bound you for life; it meant the surrender of soul and body for always. Only love could make such surrender desirable and inevitable. Without love it could surely only be imprisonment, a fettering of soul and sense. She was certain that she had in her heart no feeling for Hugh Quentin such as his wife ought to have. If he were

coming to Mildon on her account he had far better remain away.

In those three months that had elapsed since their last meeting Peggy had strenuously endeavored to rule and discipline her life as Morford had recommended her to do. She had tried to be obedient, docile, submissive. She had subjected her words and actions to a strict self-control. She had made the daily offering of all things small and great to God. She had carefully studied the books Morford had given her, and she knew now all that was most essential for a Catholic to know. And somewhere in her heart was the thought that as soon as she came of age she would take that step—that plunge into the unknown—and become a Catholic. She did not very often put that thought into actual words, for it was a very solemn as well as a very terrifying one, and she could not imagine how she should ever accomplish such a thing. But she had the feeling that all her present life was leading up to that one crowning hour when she should kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, a Catholic in name as well as in heart.

To-night she could not help thinking of that future day, and she saw in Hugh Quentin some one who could not help her at all, but who might prove rather a hindrance and an obstacle. She wished he had not been asked to come.

Then she looked round the room and saw that outspread upon the bed was the lovely new pink dress which was so like one that Deirdre O'Mara had worn in her most successful and daring part. A sudden hatred of it came over Peggy. She

looked at it with anger in her eyes, and at the little gold shoes, and the gold fillet she was to wear in her dark hair. Deirdre O'Mara had worn just such shoes on her feet, just such a fillet in her hair.

These things, pretty in themselves, produced a sudden revulsion in Peggy. She would not wear them! She would throw down the glove! She would not parry and deceive and pretend not to understand, now that her eyes had been opened. Her nature was frank; she had something of her grandfather Lampard's bluntness and honesty.

Valérie came into the room carrying some hot water. She was a young French girl who had been sent by Diana, in whose service she had been employed as children's maid. She knew almost all that there was to be known about the Metcalfes; she was aware that something had occurred at the Hunt Ball last January to cut short her young mistress's stay at Lavender, and in common with the rest of the servants at Mildon she had guessed at the reason of Sir Hugh Quentin's present visit. His valet was a singularly intelligent, well-informed young man.

She could, in fact, have told Peggy many things had Peggy ever sought her confidence.

Peggy pointed now to the litter of finery upon the bed.

"I'm not going to wear those things to-night, Valérie," she said with unusual decision.

Valérie had seen a picture post-card in Lady Metcalfe's room only a few days ago which had been a source of considerable enlightenment to her. It bore on its reverse side a flattering photo-

graph recently taken of Deirdre O'Mara, dressed in exactly such a dress as the one Miss Metcalfe was now repudiating. The face on the photograph was extremely like Miss Metcalfe's, except that it was more intelligent and much more sophisticated. It had not that serene look of almost Puritan innocence that characterized Peggy's. But the likeness was nevertheless striking, and Valérie had quickly perceived that for some occult reason of her own—a very wise one, no doubt—Lady Metcalfe in choosing this dress for her daughter had desired to emphasize it.

Valérie stared as if she could hardly believe the evidence of her own hearing. She made no attempt to obey.

"Put them all away at once, please," said Peggy in an unusually authoritative tone, "and put out my black dress and black shoes."

Valérie opened her lips as if to remonstrate, but a glance at her young mistress seemed to suggest that silence would be more prudent. Still her orders from Lady Metcalfe had been equally definite and peremptory. She hesitated.

"What are you waiting for?" said Peggy. "There is no time to lose. I shall be late as it is."

Her own courage was of less hardy a quality than could be gathered from her words.

"Milady will not be pleased. Milady said she would come and see you when you were dressed, to see if her orders had been carried out. She was very particular in the instructions she gave."

"Look here, Valérie," said Peggy, "you must please understand I intend to wear my black

dress to-night. Don't say another word or I shall send you out of the room and dress myself."

Valérie had never heard Peggy speak like that before. She was always quiet and gentle when she spoke to her maid. But to-night there was a flush almost of anger in her cheeks and her eyes were shining very brightly. Although her conscience was not very clear, she felt quite sure of one thing—that at all costs she would not remind Hugh Quentin of Deirdre O'Mara to-night. In inviting him to come she felt that her parents had placed them both in a false position. She must remedy things as far as she was able.

Valérie was doing her hair when Peggy suddenly said: "Give me the brush. I'm going to do my own hair." She undid it quickly and with a swift movement parted it again down the middle instead of at the side, for it seemed to her that when Valérie had arranged her hair thus she looked terribly like Deirdre O'Mara. Peggy's hair was fine and lustrous as black silk; she gathered it simply in a knot low at the base of her neck. It displayed as no more complicated and elaborate method could have done the simple perfection of contour that was hers. She had those twin beauties—a long neck and a small head. And she carried herself well, which made up in great measure for her lack of inches. To-night she looked beautiful, and she recognized the fact and hated it. She did not want to look pretty. The black dress was the most unbecoming one she possessed; it was not at all new, for she had had it more than a year ago when they all

mourned for a decorous few weeks for Sir John's elderly half-sister, whom they had scarcely ever seen. But she had been a Metcalfe and therefore the conventionalities were observed. Peggy knew perfectly well that it was not customary for girls of her age to wear black except when they were in mourning, and black was not at all becoming to her, she was too dark and pale. It took away something of her look of youth. She stood up when she was ready and surveyed herself in the long glass.

Valérie, who was desperately afraid of Lady Metcalfe, was inclined to be tearful.

"Milady will dismiss me for not obeying her," she whimpered.

Peggy felt oddly excited. She took no notice of Valérie, but curtsied to herself in the glass and then pirouetted lightly on one foot. It was her first definite and open act of rebellion against that suddenly disclosed plan to marry her to Hugh Quentin. She was, however, feeling a vague alarm at her own temerity; she almost wished now that she had worn the pink dress. There was something guilty and feverish about this excitement of hers; she felt as she had done when she was a small child and had deliberately embarked upon a disobedient course. The thrill of it—the joy of it—that no dark prospect of future retribution could quite quench! It was the passionate assertion of independence so dear to souls that are born free. Even when she had been caught and whipped in those days Peggy had felt that that tameless something within her was still untouched and unhurt.

Still the click of the handle as Lady Metcalfe opened the door and made her majestic entrance into the room did momentarily force her heart downward toward those little black satin shoes that had so recently been employed in that airy capering. It sent the blood to her face, and even to herself she felt and was afraid also that she looked like a small and guilty child who has been caught red-handed in the performance of some infantile felony.

"Peggy, what have you got on?" inquired Lady Metcalfe.

In that single glance all her sense of contentment and complacency had been rudely dispelled. She had pictured Peggy in the pink dress, looking deliciously like Deirdre O'Mara—perhaps proving doubly attractive to Hugh for that very reason.

"My black dress," replied Peggy.

They stood and faced each other for a curious and uncomfortable moment of mutual comprehension, at once illuminating and disconcerting.

"You must change it at once. You have just got ten minutes. The Gillespies are always late—you know what airs she gives herself!"

"Oh, I'm not going to change it, please, mother," said Peggy with something of entreaty in her voice. "I made up my mind I would wear it instead of the pink dress. I don't *want* to look like Deirdre O'Mara!"

There was a hint now of the old passionate, rebellious, troublesome Peggy.

"Don't be childish, Peggy," said Lady Metcalfe, who realized that to give way to anger

would certainly upset her for the rest of the evening, besides being utterly disastrous to a complexion that in middle age had an unfortunate tendency to be florid. "You're much too young to wear black, and besides that dress is quite out of fashion. The skirt looks perfectly ridiculous. Skirts are so narrow now. You must take it off at once. I can't bear to see you looking so dowdy—you might be the governess!"

Peggy realized that the net was outspread, and that she must either refuse to entangle her feet in it or make the first step toward that intolerable doom.

Valérie had slipped away at the first approach of Lady Metcalfe, so that Peggy and her mother were alone. They both felt that they had never seen each other so clearly—never understood each other so perfectly—before.

"Mother," said Peggy desperately, "I am not going to marry Hugh Quentin. It isn't a bit of use your trying to make me. I'm not Diana and I'm not Beatrice—I can't be forced into it!" The words came so swiftly almost as if they were tumbling over each other, and at the end of this little fiercely mutinous speech Peggy gasped for breath. "Oh, I'm ready to obey you in—in almost everything. I've tried to be a good daughter to you—you can not imagine how hard I have tried; but this is impossible and it would be wrong." She stopped, gazing at Lady Metcalfe with shining eyes.

She stood there trembling like a lily in a storm. A lily black-petalled but lovely and graceful, if a little tragic in her physical fragility. Lady

Metcalfe was completely startled out of that serene complacency that fitted her like a wonderful garment of chain-mail.

"If I were not afraid of annoying your father I should say that you are to wear what I wish or remain upstairs. But he would be very angry if you did not appear, and you know it is not very pleasant for you when he is really put out. I am afraid it is too late for you to change now. You must come down as you are. If your father notices you and disapproves, you will only have yourself to thank. I am extremely annoyed with you, Peggy."

Her avoidance of any mention of Quentin's name was intentional. There would be plenty of time to discuss that matter later on. Had not Beatrice once said as much—even more?

As they passed downstairs they felt the cold draught of air from an unseen window, carelessly left open. Lady Metcalfe gave a little appropriate shiver, but Peggy paused so that the coldness of the air might linger for a moment on her face. It seemed to give her courage—to tell her that outside the world lay free and beautiful under the stars, swept by winds, warmed by sunshine. Nature always appealed passionately to Peggy, its roughness, wildness, the very wantonness of its destructiveness, its careless indifference to hurt.

Here one was—as Peter had once said—suffocated.

Lady Metcalfe, before she had arrived at the bottom of the stairs, had lulled her mind into the pleasant and complacent belief that Peggy looked

extraordinarily well in black. It was, of course, very naughty and rebellious of her to behave like this, and to announce so bluntly her refusal to marry Quentin. But many girls disliked the idea of too early a marriage—one need not attach any importance to that. She looked again at the slight white arms, the delicate throat, the slim, small form swathed in deep, soft, clinging black. And although the dress was old-fashioned, it had been a very expensive one, copied from an exclusive Paris model. And Lady Metcalfe, determined to make the best of things, assured herself that it brought out something that was at once individual and arresting in Peggy's appearance; it gave her quite a distinguished look.

"She's really much more beautiful than Deirdre O'Mara, and then she's ten years younger!" she thought to herself with a little secret triumph.

Peggy had made her first move and won her point, and although her mother's displeasure made her feel uncomfortable, she was not without a sense of satisfaction. When they entered the big drawing-room—a very sumptuous apartment with other smaller rooms leading from it—they found Sir John alone reading the evening paper.

He looked up and his eye fell disapprovingly upon his daughter.

"What are you wearing black for?" he asked. His wife had told him that Peggy was to wear a new and very pretty pink dress to-night. He disliked black, could not bear his wife to wear it, and he thought it singularly unbecoming to Peggy.

"I like black," said Peggy in a low voice, scarcely aware of what she said.

"You must give Peggy a good scolding to-morrow," said Lady Metcalfe; "she's very naughty and rebellious and refused to wear her new dress. And it was such a delicious model—I should never have gone to that expense if I had thought she would appreciate it so little."

"You look very ugly in black," said Sir John, with one of his cold, withering smiles.

Peter appeared from the room beyond at that moment accompanied by Sir Hugh Quentin, who, after shaking hands with Peggy, turned away and began to talk to Lady Metcalfe.

Peggy watched him critically. He was tall and fair and rather colorless; his hair was almost flaxen and he wore it cut very short; his eyes were narrow and gray and he had rather a long upper lip. There was something nice about him—straightforward, simple, and wholesome. He had the very clean look which is seen to especial perfection in a fair Englishman. His linen was spotless and his clothes were beautifully cut. Peggy wondered why she found him so little attractive—this man whom her parents wished her to marry.

The Rector and his wife came in. Mr. Sturgess was tall, clean-shaven, with a hearty manner indicative of good-fellowship. His wife, a thin, nervous woman, wore her hair scraped back from her forehead with a knot of rolls pitched at an unbecoming angle, but so rich and glossy that the most indulgent observer could scarcely have supposed them to be indigenous to that sterile

soil. She smiled at Peggy and said with cheerful tactlessness: "I hope you are not in mourning, my dear!"

"Oh, no; our mourning was over long ago," said Peggy, smiling.

"You're too young to wear black," said Mrs. Sturgess, whose own dingy black satin had seen many years of honorable usage. "I wonder your mother doesn't dress you in white—it's so much more suitable for young girls. Or pale pink I think would suit you, as you are so dark."

Peggy smiled remotely.

"Mother said I should look like the governess," she said in a low, confidential tone.

Mrs. Sturgess had been a governess in a great family and had married the curate of the parish, and any allusion to her former profession made her feel almost as guilty as if it had been of a criminal nature. She blushed and blinked her eyes, not knowing whether to take offense.

The Gillespies came in late, as Lady Metcalfe had prophesied. Mrs. Gillespie was an American, very rich and always beautifully dressed. She towered above her husband, who was small and fat and fair. Though he was over forty, he had something of the aspect of a good-tempered schoolboy.

"Well, Hugh," said Mrs. Gillespie, holding out a tiny white-gloved hand to Quentin, "what are you doing in this part of the world?"

"I'm staying here," said Hugh laconically.

"Hullo, Hugh! Why haven't you been over to see us?" said Mr. Gillespie.

"I only came down to-night," said Hugh.

"But I meant to give myself that pleasure very soon."

"Come on Monday," said Mrs. Gillespie. "Come to lunch. Make Peter bring you over." She smiled at Peter.

"Thanks very much," said Peter and Hugh almost in a breath.

Lady Metcalfe heard the invitation given and promptly accepted, and she thought it a singularly tactless one. She did not invite important young men down to Mildon to fill Mrs. Gillespie's luncheon table. Monday would be Bank Holiday—a day when there was nothing to do, and she had intended that whether Peggy liked it or not, she should see a great deal of Hugh. She had even planned a long motor excursion. For she attached little importance to Peggy's fierce asseverations. The girl only required a little time to accustom herself to the idea. A little time in which to think it over, a little application of firm parental pressure, and the wedding would ensue quite naturally. It had always been Peggy's way to create a disturbance; she could never comply amenably, gracefully, as her sisters had done.

Hugh took Peggy in to dinner, and during the first part of that meal she sat by his side, stiff and silent and sullen. She wanted to make him hate her so much that he would not wish to marry her any more. And if he didn't wish it her parents could not possibly force her into his arms. She had liked him very much last summer at Oxford, and she had treated him in the frank, sisterly fashion she had always shown to Peter's

friends. But the sight of the net had been as the touch of a whip to a high-spirited horse; it had made her restive.

"What's the matter with you? Have I done anything to offend you?" said Hugh at last, after he had borne a couple of delicate snubs with admirable patience.

"You haven't done anything; I wasn't thinking of you," said Peggy with a light disdain. She did not know herself to-night; she felt excited, daring, a little beyond herself. She turned a black shoulder to Hugh and he could catch only the glimpse of a pale *profil perdu* as she began to talk to Mr. Sturgess, who was sitting at her other side. Lady Metcalfe had felt so confident that this arrangement would offer Peggy no temptation to neglect Hugh during dinner.

The young man was dismayed. He in turn became sullen. Had he been invited down here just to be made a fool of? Surely Lady Charsley, who was in his confidence, had informed her mother of the state of affairs.

He turned to talk to Mrs. Gillespie, who regarded him with her curious eyes, which were almost as green as jewels.

"What are you really doing down here, Hugh?" she inquired in the hollow, rather sepulchral voice which people thought so attractive; "no one would stay in this house for the good of their health—it is far too stuffy! Are you after the shekels? There are simply lots of them, you know!"

She was good-looking in rather a weird way, with her green eyes, heavily lashed, a dead white

skin, and pale golden hair. She was dressed in green with touches of silver and she wore some very fine emeralds. She made Hugh think of a snake—a snake that was not poisonous.

"The shekels aren't taking any," said Hugh with a grimace that was intended to hide his hurt.

"Lucky for you. What do you want a wife for at your age? Wait till you're forty!"

"Oh, I mean to marry as soon as possible," said Hugh. "I'm awfully bored down at my place since my mother married again."

His face broke into a smile.

"People have called her pretty," said Mrs. Gillespie in a very low, deep tone and bending a little forward so as to catch a glimpse of the averted Peggy, "like Deirdre O'Mara and all that kind of thing. Why, I never saw such a dowdy little thing in my life—that black dress must be a hundred years old at least. Her sisters are quite smart, especially Diana Maddinard. But as they are both married I see no object in making her such a Cinderella!"

"You may depend upon it," said Hugh resentfully, "that if she is a Cinderella it's because she wants to be and thinks she looks well in the part!"

He was angry with Peggy; her manner had mortified him. She was quite incomprehensible to-night, and the black dress seemed to be symbolic of some mood in her that eluded his comprehension.

He comforted himself with the reflection that perhaps she was aware of the reason of his visit and that she did not wish to appear to him in the light of too facile a quarry. Only he had thought

of her as such a simple, unsophisticated little thing, quite unable to play a part of any kind.

If Peggy had deliberately set herself out to attract and draw this young man to her feet, she could not have done it more thoroughly than in this foolish little attempt to repel and disgust him.

Her coldness had only set a match to the flame. He was determined to win her.

"You were a fool to come, Hugh," said Mrs. Gillespie presently; "it was just a case of 'Will you walk into my parlor?' said the spider to the fly.' You'll be gobbled up before you know where you are!"

"I liked the look of the web, you see," said Hugh.

"Oh, well; then you deserve to be gobbled up. Is there really a lot of money? I've heard that Charsley has pretty well run through Beatrice's fortune."

"I don't know—we haven't got as far as the settlements yet," said Hugh with a grin, "but in any case I've got such heaps myself I don't really want any more."

"How hopeless you are—I must leave you to your fate," said Mrs. Gillespie.

"Oh, don't do that, please, Anne—she's bitten my head off twice," said Hugh with pretended dismay.

"Perhaps she thinks it's time you'd declared yourself," she said coolly.

"Oh, is that what she means? You know better than I do. Do you think I'd better propose to her after dinner?"

"If you want to be the silliest young fool that was ever hooked with a pin!" said Mrs. Gillespie laughing.

Hugh joined in the laugh. She had put him in a good temper again and he felt cheered by her satirical comments. And he really loved Peggy. He was piqued by her attitude. Of course it was *going* to be all right, else why had he been invited to come? Nothing could have been kinder and warmer than the welcome offered by Sir John and his wife. And if the girl herself seemed something more than reluctant, she was perhaps only employing the usual feminine tactics of a feigned withdrawal to induce the enemy to approach.

He looked at Peggy. She made him think of a flower in mourning—if such a fantastic thing could be imagined. And although she was a Metcalfe, she had an indefinable air of race. That slim and long throat of hers—the slight arms and tiny hands—the little head with the close dark silken hair arranged with such perfect simplicity. Why did she wear black to-night? Black was not the wear for youth—if only for his sake she should have appeared in something more gay! He watched her covertly. She *was* beautiful.

"I'll ask her to come on Monday, too. That'll give you a better opportunity on neutral ground," said Mrs. Gillespie, after a pause. "Say 'thank you nicely,'" she added with a smile.

"Thank you nicely," repeated Hugh, in a parrot-like tone; but a light leaped into his eyes and he looked at her gratefully. "It's topping

of you to do that, you know—I mean I’m most awfully grateful!”

“I wonder if it’s really kind to give babies what they cry for?” she said. “I’m not sure that a good smack isn’t better for them!”

But in the drawing-room after dinner she sought her opportunity of going up and speaking to Peggy.

She had hardly spoken to her in her life; the youngest Miss Metcalfe had seemed to her so shy and retiring—so different from her worldly sisters—that she had not troubled about her. Still, she felt there must be something attractive about a girl whom Hugh could allow himself to fall seriously in love with. She knew he had been the despair of mothers with even beautiful marriageable daughters. What had made him fix his thoughts so resolutely upon little Peggy Metcalfe?

“I want you to come on Monday, too,” she said in her odd, gruff little voice. “Peter and Hugh are both coming to luncheon.”

Peggy opened her lips as if to refuse. But that would have been an unheard-of independence of action impossible hereafter to excuse or explain. All invitations were referred to Lady Metcalfe. She glanced toward her mother.

“I must ask mother,” she said, smiling. “She may not like me to be away—there are so many people staying here.”

“Oh, I’ll make it all right with your mother,” said Mrs. Gillespie; “you mustn’t disappoint me. Why are you wearing that doleful dress to-night, my child?”

Peggy crimsoned. She felt as if those experienced eyes had penetrated into her motive, which became all at once trivial and absurd.

Seeing that her question produced only silence and confusion and that no answer appeared to be forthcoming, Mrs. Gillespie moved away from Peggy and went up to Lady Metcalfe, repeating the invitation.

"I want Peggy to come with Peter and Hugh on Monday. She wants to know if you'll let her."

It was not a very exact statement of the case, and perhaps Lady Metcalfe divined this.

"Hugh wishes it particularly," said Mrs. Gillespie in a hollow undertone.

Their eyes met. Lady Metcalfe said:

"I shall be delighted to let her go."

It was evident that Hugh was in earnest, undeterred by the black dress, the symptoms of withdrawal that had been all too visible during dinner to that watchful maternal eye. These had but given the spur to the young man's resolves. But Peggy? There had been something so very unreasonable about Peggy's conduct to-night! She glanced at her daughter.

"Oh, that'll be all right," said Mrs. Gillespie, with a dreadful frankness that almost pierced the complacency of Lady Metcalfe; "she is only jibbing, you know. You leave her to Hugh!"

Lady Metcalfe thought the metaphor a trifle crude. But she said, almost as if she had been surprised into a corresponding frankness:

"I don't know. I don't understand Peggy. She's always been troublesome. She has always

given me more trouble than all the others put together."

"She was bound to do that," said Mrs. Gillespie, bestowing a perfunctory glance full of admiration upon Peggy. "But she's perfectly lovely, and if she won't have Hugh she'll get some one much better!"

"Oh, we've never considered her at all pretty," said Lady Metcalfe, repudiating the compliment; "she isn't at all like her sisters. Although I am their mother, I can not help seeing that Diana and Beatrice are beautiful women."

No—Peggy was not of the type that was admired in the family. She was the only dark and colorless one. There was something strange about her, as if she did not realize her position. Lady Metcalfe felt a kind of jealous dislike at hearing her youngest daughter immoderately praised.

Mrs. Gillespie was made to feel that she had said the wrong thing.

"Oh, well, of course she's not a bit like her sisters," she remarked carelessly.

CHAPTER XII

PEGGY had rather dreaded the advent of Easter Sunday, but the coming of Hugh Quentin and the little struggle with her mother had driven the dread from her mind. It was one of those days when Lady Metcalfe drove down to the eight o'clock service at Mildon Church and expected Peggy to accompany her. On Christmas Day she and her daughter had both been suffering from colds, so nothing had been said, and Peggy had not been asked to attend such a service since her experience at the Rest House early in December.

She had a vague hope that her mother might forget to say anything to her, for her mind was evidently deeply occupied with that determination to arrange a marriage between herself and Hugh Quentin; there could be no doubt at all about that after the little scene that had taken place over the pink dress. It might be that in the midst of his preoccupation Lady Metcalfe might forget to express her desire that Peggy should accompany her on the following morning.

Perhaps Mr. Sturgess recalled it to her mind, for he made some excuse for leaving early with his wife. "To-morrow's an early day with us, you know, Lady Metcalfe. We must turn in in good time," he had said.

When every one had gone and the men had all departed to the smoking-room, Peggy went up to her mother to kiss her and say good-night.

"I shall expect you to be ready at a quarter

to eight to-morrow, Peggy," said her mother. "I have ordered the motor. Mind you are down in good time."

She did not even wait for a reply. For the last five years, ever since Peggy's confirmation, she had made precisely the same little speech to her on the eve of the most of the great Feasts of the Church. It never occurred to her now that Peggy would offer any resistance.

Peggy went up to her room, and dismissing Valérie as soon as possible, sat down by the fire. The April night was very chilly and she threw a woollen wrapper over her nightdress. Her little feet were enclosed in warm slippers. She looked diminutive and childish with her hair hanging all loosened about her face.

All thoughts of Hugh and the unpleasant little episode in connection with the pink dress had vanished utterly from her mind—had been in a sense swept away by this simple remark of her mother's. She felt that she could not possibly accompany her to church. Yet what excuse could she offer? Short of telling her the whole truth, she felt there was none to be made.

In despair she went to a little locked drawer where she kept the books Morford had given her, and took out the "Garden of the Soul." Peggy had read and reread it until she almost knew it by heart. It had taught her in plain language the duties and obligations of the Catholic. There were rules for the examination of conscience, sets of questions intended to help the penitent to discover exactly where he had sinned, prayers to be said before and after confession.

The thought of confession had never presented to Peggy that obstacle which it does to many intending converts. Perhaps she was too young to resent any form of discipline, for in spite of the luxury in which she had always lived, Peggy had been strictly and even severely brought up by her parents. She had been less indulged, perhaps, than the others, and as a child she had been more frequently punished. It was quite possible that this training helped her now when she approached in thought the sacrament of Penance. But even if it had offered any special hardship to her, Peggy would never have permitted it to become a definite obstacle in her path. Her whole mind was set in the most single-hearted manner upon becoming a Catholic as soon as possible. She was prepared to pay any price that might be demanded of her in order to gain that end. It lay at the back of all her obstinate determination not to marry Hugh.

Peggy had forced herself every night as a kind of preparation to examine her conscience with the help of this little book. It was a process that seemed to throw a powerful searchlight upon the soul, disclosing its dark places, revealing its imperfections. She had learned in this way that she habitually committed the same faults over and over again—those very imperfections in herself that she so clearly realized and tried to conquer—faults of wilfulness, of obstinacy, even of disobedience and rebellion. She had often felt that it would be a comfort when she could receive absolution for those faults; it would surely help her not to commit them over and over again.

During these last three months—indeed, ever since her return from Lavender—she had made efforts to amend. She had tried to put Morford's advice into practice, and to make her daily life a preparation for the day when she should become a Catholic. It had not been easy, but she had not always failed. It had helped her to be docile and gentle; it had checked her too impulsive speech; in many little things that were disagreeable to her she had submitted without remonstrance. But to-night she clearly saw that she had come to the cross-roads. She had dreaded and feared that some such moment might arise, forcing her to disclose her ultimate intention before the time was ripe for her to take the decisive step. And now the moment seemed to be approaching on swift wings. She could not possibly accompany her mother to Mildon Church on the following day. And it would be the more remarkable because in former years Peggy had always gone eagerly. But to-night the influence of the Rest House was strong upon her; she seemed to be back in the chapel praying through the long, cold hours. She could hear herself say again in a breathless whisper, "Oh, I will come. I will come."

To all converts there must come the moment of definite breach when the sharp conviction comes upon them that they can no longer receive communion in the Protestant Church. To the High Churchman this may even be a moment of agony, a kind of spiritual farewell, a severance from something beloved and sacred. But to others the moment holds nothing of pain; the soul submit-

ting instantly to another and higher authority only sees in the severance part of the task demanded of it, and can no longer accept anything else, anything less than the Truth it has beheld. Peggy felt that fierce recoil which some people do. She was instinctively preparing for her First Communion in the Catholic Church, a divine event for which she was waiting with eager impatience amid a sense of acute spiritual starvation. Her nostalgia had slowly grown during these past months until it had become a torment; to-night she felt that she must cry aloud her suffering for all the world to hear.

She felt now that something had been demanded of her which it was no longer in her power to give. She could not conform to the Protestant Church. She had known the truth in one swift hour of miraculous illumination, and she could not look back.

But to refuse and rebel required courage. Lady Metcalfe would not be slow to discern the motive for this reluctance, to trace it back with unerring finger to that night spent at the Rest House.

Clearly Peggy had come to the cross-roads. She felt that rather than comply she would face any disgrace—any punishment. If need be, she would speak out.

She got into bed at last, but she could not sleep, and sometimes during the night she switched on the electric light and read that little, worn book of devotion and prayer. It seemed to give her courage and to help her.

When Valérie came to call her, she told her

that she had had a bad night; her head was aching; she did not feel well. She could not get up; she would have her breakfast in bed. The excuses were perfectly true, and yet she felt as she made them that they were the excuses of a coward.

At any other time Lady Metcalfe would certainly have accepted them with perhaps only a word of reproof at the lack of effort thus demonstrated. But she was on the alert just then for any possible key to the solution of the problem. She came hurrying upstairs on the receipt of her daughter's message and breathlessly entered Peggy's room.

"My dear Peggy, why aren't you ready? What on earth is the matter with you?"

"I have had a bad night; my head aches," said Peggy, flushing nervously.

She hoped that perhaps there would not be time for her mother to make more searching inquiries.

But Lady Metcalfe's eye had fallen upon the little brown book that lay on a table by Peggy's bedside.

"What is that book, Peggy?" she asked, and made a step forward.

Peggy had utterly forgotten that she had left the incriminating volume on the table. She stretched out her hand to seize it, but she was too late—Lady Metcalfe had already taken possession of it. She looked at the worn gilt lettering of the title and read aloud in slow and awful accents, "The Garden of the Soul."

Peggy was as white as a sheet; she watched

her mother with a kind of fascinated gaze; her limbs trembled so much that the bed-clothes stirred.

Lady Metcalfe was not content with the title only; she opened the book and glanced at its contents. "The Ordinary of the Mass," "The Canon of the Mass," "Devotions for Communion," "Devotions for Confession," "Examination of Conscience," "The Particular Examen," "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament"—these were only a few of the headings that caught her eye, but they taught her that this was a book of Roman Catholic prayer which Peggy had most assuredly been reading and studying. It offered a perfect explanation for this idle excuse of a bad night and a headache.

"Where did you get this book, Peggy?" she asked. She looked at Peggy curiously, almost as if she had been a stranger.

"It was given to me," said Peggy.

"By whom?"

"By Mr. Morford."

"I thought as much," said Lady Metcalfe; "this man has set himself deliberately to work to corrupt your mind. Is this the reason why you are not ready to go with me now—the real reason?"

"Yes, mother," said Peggy, in a voice so faint that it could scarcely be heard. "I am very sorry . . . it is impossible." Her courage gave way; she began to cry.

"I can not stay and talk to you now, Peggy," said Lady Metcalfe as she moved, still holding the book, toward the door. "You had better get

up and after breakfast I will see you in my room. I shall be late as it is." She glanced at the clock. It was terrible of Peggy to spring this mine upon her; she had offered no word of reluctance last night. Even Lady Metcalfe was upset. She did not want to have a disturbance with Hugh in the house, and she did not in the least know how to act.

It disturbed her especially as she sped down to church in the motor to remember that Beatrice had always held that Peggy had been less influenced by the religion itself than by the man who had so unwisely taught her about it. She had believed that the whole episode was past and forgotten, yet here it was cropping up again, just at a moment, too, when it threatened to interfere with all their plans. Peggy had been flagrantly disobedient and deceitful, had been filling her mind with dangerous Roman Catholic literature, which had evidently perverted her moral sense and induced her to disobey and thwart her parents. Did this lie, too, at the bottom of her strange conduct toward Hugh? Was the influence still so strong that it would prevent Peggy from marrying a Protestant husband?

CHAPTER XIII

IT WAS Hugh Quentin's presence at Mildon that prevented matters from coming to a crisis. Lady Metcalfe hoped that Peggy would, upon reflection, repent of the enormity of her conduct, and make tardy amends by accepting Hugh when he invited her to be his wife.

She did not want to have a scene with Peggy; there would be tears on the girl's part—and Peggy looked singularly plain when she had been crying. To have family dissensions when the house was full of guests might seriously diminish the popularity of Mildon as a week-end resort. Lady Metcalfe was restored to her usual complacency by the time she had partaken of her coffee that morning, and when Peggy came down to her room and timidly approached her she said brightly:

"My dear Peggy, I am sure you have come to tell me you are very sorry that you displeased me this morning. We won't say anything more about it and you will know much better next time. I think you'd better go back to your room, because your eyes are still very red and any one can see that you've been crying. I hope you will come down looking sweet and cheerful, as you *can* look when you choose, at luncheon."

Thus admonished, Peggy went upstairs. So nothing more was to be said, but there was a hint in Lady Metcalfe's words that any future conduct of the kind would not so readily be over-

looked. The pressure was being applied rather sharply now. Peggy was to make amends, and how? If she consented to marry Hugh all would be forgiven and forgotten! But to marry Hugh would put an end for ever to her cherished dream of becoming a Catholic.

When she said good-night to her mother that night Lady Metcalfe put her arms round her neck and kissed her affectionately.

"These are very important days for you, my dear child," she said in her smooth way, "and something tells me that perhaps to-morrow will be the most important one of all. I know my Peggy will respond."

She looked into Peggy's dark eyes, but there was little response in their somber depths. She could almost have fancied that the girl shrank ever so slightly away from her, but of course that was quite impossible. It was a critical time, of course—many girls resented the thought of giving up their freedom and independence.

Peggy looked at her mother almost in alarm. There was something so implacable, so determined about her. One might as well try to make a permanent impression upon a feather bed—that soft resistance of hers was on the face of it so unassailable. She had been forgiven her conduct of the morning, but she was to show repentance in a practical way; she was to yield in this other and more important affair.

"I am your mother," continued Lady Metcalfe softly; "I know what is best for you. I only desire your happiness. I wish to see you as happy as your sisters, with the same kind of

happiness. You have seen both Diana and Beatrice in their beautiful homes. A happy marriage—that's the best fate for a girl."

"Not unless—you are in love," faltered Peggy, trembling like a leaf.

"My dear child, if you can honor your husband there need be no silly romance. The great thing is to marry a good man of your own world—some one who can give you the things to which you are accustomed."

Again there was a pause. Encouraged by Peggy's silence, Lady Metcalfe continued:

"A young girl can not always choose wisely for herself—especially a girl with so little experience of the world as yourself. But you must trust your parents, Peggy, to choose wisely for you."

Was there really something at the back of all Peggy's resistance? It was only kind to let her see quite clearly how futile that resistance would be.

"Your father has made up his mind to give you exactly what he gave your sisters if you make a marriage of which he can thoroughly approve."

She kissed Peggy's forehead.

"That's all I wanted to say to you, my dear. Good-night."

Peggy, still silent, went out of the room. She had the curious physical sensation that heavy, crushing things had passed over her body, numbing and paralyzing it. It seemed to her almost possible then that she would obey, and promise to marry Hugh if he should ask her to be his wife.

When she awoke the next morning it was with the feeling that something dreadful was going to happen. She could not at first remember what it was, but in a flash her mother's conversation came back to her mind. Lady Metcalfe had said that this would be a very important day for Peggy, and that she hoped she would respond. There was that luncheon party at Mrs. Gillespie's to be faced. The very thought of it filled her with fear and apprehension. It seemed then that her daily life, which she had so passionately wished to make into a preparation for her reception, as Morford had advised, was to be filled with fierce storms, agonizing rebellions against authority.

She thought of Beatrice—Beatrice, who had meekly obeyed and submitted. The fear that she would be compelled to imitate her sister diminished the courage she had hitherto felt. She longed for advice. If she could only have seen Morford and asked him what she ought to do! Although he was harsh and stern, he seemed to see always quite clearly what was right and what was wrong. She could rely upon him to tell her the truth about her duty. He had authority, but not of a personal individual kind; in this respect his power was derivative, was based, as she was dimly aware, upon the teachings of his Faith. It was this fact that made his words seem of such value.

Peggy did not see Hugh that day until it was time to start for the Gillespies'. It was a fine day with bright sunshine and a glow of real

spring warmth was in the air. In obedience to her mother, Peggy had put on a perfectly new white cloth coat and skirt and a little blue straw hat that was very becoming to her. From the crown of her hat to the tips of her little white shoes Peggy Metcalfe looked a very dainty person indeed. Lady Metcalfe kissed her approvingly, and Hugh, standing there in the hall, watched the embrace. He thought that she looked to-day wonderfully like Deirdre O'Mara in one of her *ingénue* parts. Yet her face possessed, too, something of the spiritual that had never been in Deirdre's.

"Where's Peter?" said Peggy.

"He's out there, looking at the car. He's going to drive, you know."

Peggy was a little dismayed at hearing this; she wondered whose suggestion it had been. The motor was a closed one and she would have to sit inside. What if Hugh insisted upon keeping her company all through that long drive? She went out of the front door and ran down the steps to where Peter was standing.

She slipped her arm in his. "Peter," she said in an imploring whisper.

"Well, what is it, Pegs?"

"Make Sir Hugh sit with you," she whispered. "I don't want him to come with me. Oh, why did you say you'd drive?"

"The mater said I must. Jones has got a cold."

"Yes, but the other one could have come." Her cheeks were on fire with indignation.

Sir Hugh came out and stood on the door-

step, his hands in his pockets. He looked very cheerful and assured, as if things were going well with him. He smiled and helped Peggy into the car in a possessive way that made her shrink from his touch. Her nerves were on edge.

Peter said coolly:

"I expect you'd rather sit outside on such a fine day, wouldn't you, Hugh?"

Sir Hugh complied, nevertheless he gave Peggy a swift glance. Lady Metcalfe, who joined them now, saw that it was too late to alter things. She attributed the blame to Peter. How tactless he was, how careless of his sister's interests. Young men were always selfish.

"You're not afraid of the cold?" said Peter.

"No; but your sister—it's dull for her alone." He turned his head and looked through the window at Peggy sitting huddled up in a corner with a great fur rug over her knees for all the world as if she were cold.

"She's got a headache—she'd rather be alone," said Peter, carelessly. He could not quite make out Peggy's attitude to Hugh. His father had spoken to him yesterday as if the engagement were practically arranged; he wondered why Peggy had said nothing about it to him.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Hugh.

The car went swiftly over the dry and hard roads. Mildon Place was only five miles away, and they very soon found themselves before the high iron gates of the nearest lodge.

Peggy had looked almost mechanically at the two heads in front of her, the one fair and the other dark. Then she began to criticize Hugh

Quentin. His head was a trifle too narrow, his neck a shade too thick. She had never noticed this peculiarity before; perhaps in comparing it to Peter's perfect proportions the defect was more noticeable. She wondered if she could have learned to love him if she had not been searching for a spiritual ideal. He could not help her in the quest, and if she married him it meant that she would have to forego that quest. He had spoken slightly of Catholics in alluding to the Daltons in her hearing. She had never been in love, but she felt that the emotion must certainly hold a delicate and mysterious delight that was utterly absent from any feeling she had for Hugh. She had liked him well enough as Peter's friend, but now that his intentions were manifested she felt that she no longer liked him at all.

Mrs. Gillespie greeted her with a little smile, disdainful, experienced.

"So you've really come, Peggy? I hardly expected you. I wasn't a bit sure what you meant to do on Saturday night," she said in her hollow voice.

She addressed Peggy by her name in the informal manner with which one addresses a child.

Peggy was very silent. Mrs. Gillespie made her feel shy and awkward, like a school-girl.

"Hugh must be in the seventh heaven," she added when they were alone together in the drawing-room before luncheon was announced.

She seemed to regard the fact of Peggy's appearance to-day in the light of a tacit capitulation. And she was thinking all the time how charming Peggy was looking. That blue hat

became her vastly, as they would have said in the eighteenth century. And of course that silence, that shyness, would soon wear off. Only it was strange of Hugh to fall in love with anything so young and ingenuous.

She narrowed her green eyes and said:

"Hugh's a great dear. I've known him ever since I came to England. I'm sure he'll make you happy. If Blossom were grown up there's no one I'd sooner give her to."

Peggy resisted an impulse to shiver under the application of this particular form of torture, that seemed to shame rather than to hurt her.

"Never mind if you don't feel enthusiastic at first. Hugh may not be exactly a Prince Charming, though he would be handsome if he hadn't got such a long upper lip. But he's a downright good sort. And he hasn't got a mortgaged estate like Charsley had, and he isn't a foolish, idle boy like Maddinard. You'll have done better really than either of your sisters."

Peggy felt like a mouse hesitating on the very threshold of the trap, half-hypnotized by the cheese within.

"There—I won't tease you any more," said Mrs. Gillespie. "Come in to lunch—there'll only be ourselves. I couldn't scrape up any one, but it doesn't matter. I hate a crowd."

When they had all assembled in the dining-room—a fine room with paneled walls hung with splendid old family portraits, and with beautiful views over the Park—a small child was brought in by her nurse and perched on a highchair close to her mother. Mrs. Gillespie stooped and be-

stowed a perfunctory embrace on the mop of golden curls.

"Darling Blossom," she murmured in a cooing tone.

Blossom was a very dainty little creature of four, with green eyes just like her mother's. Her father caught her up and covered her face with kisses. She resisted a little and Peggy heard her say:

"Don't, Daddy—you'll *crush* my fwock!"

Peggy sat next to her host with Hugh on her other side. Peter was opposite, with Blossom for his neighbor. She stared at him with great interest.

Peggy felt nervous and unstrung.

"Hugh, you must come and see my new studio after lunch. I've had it put near the wood, because I was always being disturbed by people when I worked in the house," said Mrs. Gillespie. She was an expert photographer and spent a great deal of time over this hobby.

Peggy flushed a little. She knew perfectly well that Mrs. Gillespie would contrive to send her to the studio with Hugh; the thought frightened her a little. Peter must come with them—he must, he must! Peter must not desert her. She answered her host at random; her mind was full of the evil hour that was so fast approaching. She did not dare look at Hugh. He was so cheerful and confident, inclined to be a trifle possessive in a good-humored way, as if he were cheered by Mrs. Gillespie's support. Peggy had never felt so acutely miserable in all her life as she did at that luncheon party.

The afternoon was fine. Above the dark purple line of the Weald, touched faintly with the bloom of spring, a motionless belt of cloud hung, pale and pearl-tinted. The grass in the Park was vividly green and the tall elms showed their first emerald-colored leaves. The borders were gay with the gold of innumerable daffodils. The air was full of spring scents, and the wind had the cold, clean quality that it wins in its passage across the sea.

When they started forth for their walk after luncheon Peggy found herself with Hugh, but Mrs. Gillespie and Peter were following close behind with the dogs. It was only when they reached the studio, a gaudy new red brick building with a roof of red tiles, that Peggy perceived that the others had suddenly vanished. She was alone with Hugh Quentin and he was holding the door open, inviting her to enter.

The room was a large one and the walls were hung with specimens of Mrs. Gillespie's work. She was extremely skilful, and both her portraits and landscapes were beautiful. There were lovely studies of little Blossom at all stages of her young life. She made an almost perfect model.

Hugh went on talking quietly, admiring and criticizing the photographs, and Peggy listened in absolute silence. She felt like some one in a dream.

"You are looking tired," said Hugh at last; "hadn't you better sit down? I suppose the others will join us here presently."

He touched Peggy's arm as if he wished to

lead her to a seat, but she shrank away from him and said in a hoarse voice:

"Please—I would rather stand!"

There was a moment's pause and then he said suddenly:

"Peggy—I love you—I want you to marry me." He caught her two hands in his in a firm grip that made flesh and spirit alike rebel at the capture; his face, pale and emotional, was bending slightly toward her.

Peggy wrenched herself free.

"No—no—it's impossible. Please let me go—Sir Hugh, I can't marry you!"

But his hands closed on hers again and held them as in a vise.

"Peggy, your parents both wish it. And I love you—I promise to make you happy—to care for you always."

His voice softened; he dropped her hands. Peggy stood there trembling like a lily.

"I can't marry you," she said. She was on the verge of tears.

Had he been cheated—duped? There was more in this determined refusal than could be attributed to mere coyness. Yet Lady Metcalfe had spoken with perfect confidence on the subject of her daughter's decision.

But Hugh's mind traveled swiftly back to the Hunt Ball.

"There is some one else?" he demanded.

Peggy shook her head. "Oh, indeed, there is no one."

"Are you sure it is not that man Morford?" said Hugh.

Peggy's blanched face turned to a lovely crimson. She tried to turn it away. "There is no one," she said again.

All Hugh's ancient jealousy was aroused.

"Why did you let me come?" he said angrily. "I was assured—your father and mother both assured me. I had my own misgivings, it is true. But you must have said something to make them think that you would not utterly refuse."

"I told my mother I could not marry you," said Peggy in a low tone.

But he seemed to be paying no attention to her words.

"It is useless of you to think of Morford," said Hugh. "You will never be allowed to marry him. But you will never get me to believe that he did not make love to you at the Hunt Ball last winter. I am not blind, and I saw the way he looked at you!"

"The way he looked at me?" repeated Peggy, amazed at his words.

"Yes—as no man looks at a girl unless he is in love with her." Hugh was almost beside himself with rage and disappointment. "You must surely know this as well as I do. You did not cry *then!*" he added, as Peggy's tears began to flow.

"It isn't true," she sobbed; "it isn't true. He has never said a word of that kind to me. He has only seen me twice. There is no one—no one whom I care for at all."

"I still can not understand why you let me come to Mildon. It was done with your consent and you can not have been in ignorance of my

hopes in the matter. Still less do I understand why you came here to-day!" His voice was fiercely reproachful.

Peggy sank down on the seat which she had at first refused and began to cry. Hugh was dismayed at the violent outburst of tears. He was angry with himself now and he tried awkwardly to comfort her.

He knelt down by her side.

"Peggy—dearest—don't cry—I know I have been a brute, but I've been horribly jealous of Morford. Forgive me—let's be friends at least. We used to be friends once—I always thought you liked me, at any rate."

Peggy's gratitude was always quickly aroused.

"Oh, I did like you—I do like you," she assured him almost with eagerness. "It's only that I don't love you—that I can't marry you. And they'll be so angry with me at home."

Her white face showed terror now—almost the terror of a child.

"They always said I wasn't like Diana and Beatrice!"

"No more you are," said Hugh cheerily; "you are far more beautiful!" He took her hand gently now in his and stroked it, and this time Peggy did not shrink from his touch. This change of mood in her to one of gentleness gave him an odd renewal of hope even at the moment when things were going worst with him. He sat beside her still holding her hand while Peggy with her free hand wiped her eyes and began to think she had behaved very foolishly indeed. Hugh had not meant to alarm her and his angry

words were the outcome of the jealousy he had felt for Morford. There was, indeed, one moment when Peggy almost told him the truth about Morford, and how it was his religion that attracted her and not himself. But she felt perhaps it would be wiser not to touch again upon that rather thorny topic.

Had any one looked in suddenly upon them they might have been pardoned for imagining that Hugh's suit had been successful. He was still rubbing Peggy's cold little hand, caressing it gently, and the little action comforted them both. He was certainly dearer to Peggy than he had ever been before. She liked him when he treated her as Peter might have done—like a big, strong, elder brother, in fact it was the lover in Hugh that repelled her.

"I'll make it all right with your mother, Peggy," he said. "Why, I wouldn't hurt you for the world—you poor little trembling thing."

Peggy was soon soothed into composure. She rose at last, straightened her hat in front of the glass and dabbed at her eyes with her already wet handkerchief. The tip of her nose was faintly reddened.

"How horrible I look," she said, smiling at this wan presentment.

"You look simply adorable," said Hugh. He stood there by her side, looking at her mirrored face.

She moved toward the door. Hugh followed her and they went back down the path toward the house. There was no one in sight. In spite of all that had passed between them they were

better friends now than when they started. There was a simple understanding between them. And Hugh was by no means without hope. He believed Peggy's word when she assured him that there was no one else.

"If I can ever help you in any way you must write to me," said Hugh. "And oh, Peggy, if you should ever change your mind."

As they approached the house they could see Mrs. Gillespie and Peter standing on the terrace and evidently waiting for their return.

"Well, Peggy! Well, Hugh!" she called, in her hollow little voice.

She turned to Peter and said:

"Don't you long to know what's happened?"

She had been talking to him about his sister, and had half converted him to her point of view.

"You must use your influence with her. People say you're awfully devoted to each other. Don't let her make a silly mistake now. She's just at the age when she wants what she can't have."

Peter looked at her curiously. Did Peggy know best what was for her own happiness? Did any of us know? Were the ideals of youth illusionary, and the ideals of age the only solid ones that made for security? Custom, he knew, wears down the finest, freest spirit. His own dreams had sensibly diminished after three months of the office stool.

"We all ought to be left to choose for ourselves," he said half sullenly, for he could not bear to think his point of view had changed even a little.

"Ah, I used to think that, too," said Mrs. Gillespie, "but now I feel I know *ever* so much better than Blossom when she cries for cake and chocolate. And if I whip her she doesn't like it—though *I* know it's good for her. Aren't we all just children? Crying for things we can't have—crying because we get hurt?"

Then Hugh and Peggy came up to them. Both looked very serious, but quite calm. It was impossible to read anything from their faces. But just before he was going away Hugh managed to say to Mrs. Gillespie:

"It's no go, Anne. She won't have me." He winced as he spoke and she saw that the hurt had gone deep. She felt that she would like to put her arms round his neck and say all kinds of comforting things to him just as if he had been Blossom. For he, too, was crying for the things that were out of his reach.

"Oh, poor Hughie," she said.

CHAPTER XIV

LADY METCALFE was not long left in ignorance as to the result of the visit to Mildon Place, for Hugh made some inadequate excuse for cutting short his stay and announced his intention of leaving for town early on the following day.

Although she had little opportunity of saying anything to Peggy before the departure of her guests, she was extremely angry with her. Why was her youngest child so different from all the others? Again and again she told herself that there was something strange and unusual about Peggy. Something, too, that was elusive and un-touchable. Lady Metcalfe was a very materialistic person, and she was hardly to be blamed for this, for she had spent all her life in surroundings where material comfort was the principal object of life; she had lived in a money-making atmosphere, and though she went to church nearly every Sunday and insisted also that her household should always attend at least one service on that day, the concerns of the soul scarcely touched her at all. It was a subject she regarded with a respectful ignorance, and though she certainly did give it a perfunctory glance, as it were, on Sundays, she thought of it as having as little as possible to do with the present world. The soul was doubtless immortal and its concern was, therefore, chiefly with eternity. Lady Metcalfe believed also with per-

fect complacency that when she died her soul would go to heaven; she would have been shocked if any one had suggested any doubt of this. But she had, nevertheless, discerned in Peggy an ambiguous quality as of a soul striving for freedom, for expression. It was in Peter, too, but less obtrusively, and Peter was beginning to conform quite admirably to Metcalfe standards; in another year or two he would certainly become a partner, when he would learn to appreciate the value and advantage of wealth. But Peggy was not worldly; the things that had pleased her sisters left her cold; one could not charm her with pretty frocks and smart functions. There was an inherent simplicity about her, as there always is in those persons where the soul dominates the body. Material things—delicate food, soft raiment and the like—become, as it were, physical or temporal accidents not even always advantageous, since the possession of them may actually serve to hinder the soul on its upward progress and suffocate the quest of the spiritual.

Peggy's refusal to marry Hugh came to her mother's ears with something of the effect of a violent physical shock. She was at first unable to believe that Peggy had dared thus openly to rebel. Although Beatrice had up to the last moment wept and threatened rebellion, she had accepted Charsley very prettily, indeed, when the crucial moment came. Lady Metcalfe had quite persuaded herself that this was how Peggy would behave. During the past three months, ever since that deplorable episode in the winter, there had been a very marked change in the girl, and

it really looked as if she had made up her mind to turn over a new leaf. There had been something very charming about her, in her thought for others, her unselfishness, her eagerness to please. Even Sir John had noticed it and it had made him wonder why his Peggy (his little Peggy, as he called her in moments of rare affection) had not yet been sought in marriage, for in his eyes she had a quiet charm that her sisters had never possessed. She had contributed greatly of late to the peace and contentment of the domestic circle. Now an abrupt change had fallen upon the scene. Not only had a young man of wealth and position and excellent character come forward with the ardent desire to marry Peggy, but he had been met with as sound a refusal as an eager lover could ever have feared to meet with. It was an unheard-of piece of impertinence on Peggy's part, especially as she had actually encouraged the idea of his coming to Mildon. When Sir John was told what had passed he was very angry indeed, and said that Peggy had made fools of them all. His anger was, in his own opinion, justifiable, and this time Lady Metcalfe did not wish nor try to screen her daughter from the paternal wrath. She washed her hands of her and left her to her fate and to the sound scolding she so richly deserved.

She, too, had been deluded by the calm of the past three months. She had felt that Peggy had somehow realized the enormity of her conduct and had tried to make amends for her behavior while at Lavender. She had not let Hugh come until she felt quite sure that Peggy was in a

state of submission, of filial tractability. Lady Metcalfe had played her cards with great care, calculating all the chances. But it can not be denied that the most skilful players are often put out of their reckoning by one who defiantly disregards all the rules and conventions of the game; it upsets the balance and poise of things, producing confusion and complications.

Perhaps that apparent change had been simply a surface thing—an astute manœuvre intended to divert attention from the real thoughts that were swaying her. And when Lady Metcalfe put two and two together and thought of Peggy's refusal to accompany her to church on Easter Sunday, and of her own discovery of the "Garden of the Soul," she began to attribute the whole business to the influence of Morford. Was she still thinking of him? Were her leanings toward Catholicism still governing her thoughts? A week ago Lady Metcalfe would most unhesitatingly have answered both these questions with a decisive negative. But her daughter's refusal of Hugh Quentin had upset all her calculations, and then there had been that disagreeable exhibition of rebellion on Easter Sunday. No, it was impossible to dogmatize about Peggy. There was something elusive about the girl—something one could not hold or handle. In the first ebullition of her own wrath she placed her husband in full possession of all the facts of the case in so far as she herself knew them, and begged him to give Peggy the talking-to which she merited.

"When she was a small child I always had to bring her to you when I couldn't manage her,"

said Lady Metcalfe. Her complacency had broken down and she was in tears. "Will you talk to her, John?"

"I can't force her to marry a man she doesn't want," said Sir John, "but you send her to me and I'll tell her straight what I think about all this Roman Catholic nonsense. That's what we've got to put a stop to, and I'm only sorry you didn't tell me about it long ago. It oughtn't to have been allowed to go on."

His grim hatchet face had an unpleasantly determined expression, as Peggy advanced into the study in obedience to the paternal summons. She had been waiting for it, dreading it all day, and now the moment had come she did not feel quite so nervous as she expected. Many years must have elapsed since she had last been summoned to appear before that ultimate tribunal.

"What's this I hear about you and Quentin?" growled Sir John.

But as he looked at Peggy his heart softened a little. She looked so young—almost like a child! There was something pathetic and appealing in that so evident effort to appear calm and controlled.

"I am sorry, father," said Peggy simply, raising her dark eyes to his.

"Sorry?" repeated Sir John, with a little snort of contempt; "you should have said straight out you didn't mean to marry him when your mother first talked about asking him down. You knew what he was coming for. Your mother told me she had put it before you quite clearly."

"I didn't know that he was going to ask me

to marry him. It never entered my head until—until mother told me to put on that pink dress. But when she did speak to me I said I couldn't marry him. She didn't believe me—she thought I was going to be like Beatrice!"

Although this slightly altered the complexion of affairs in Peggy's favor, Sir John had other reasons for being imperfectly satisfied.

"In Beatrice's case," he said, "there was Claude Vernon—a most ineligible young man. May I ask who the fortune hunter is in your case, who is trying to persuade you not to marry Quentin?"

A very deep flush overspread Peggy's face. But her eyes met her father's squarely and there was something fearless in her answer.

"No one has persuaded me. I have never cared for Hugh at all. I liked him as I have always liked Peter's friends—because they were his friends."

In spite of the deepening color in her cheeks her voice was cool and steady.

"That is an evasive answer. Who is this other man—the Claude Vernon in your case?"

"There is no other man," said Peggy. Her heart beat violently against her body, and it seemed to her that between herself and her father she saw another figure—a dark, looming figure. And it flashed into her memory that Hugh had said Morford had looked at her as no man would look at a girl unless he were in love with her. It was a mistake, of course, born of Hugh's foolish jealousy of Morford, but the words came back very forcibly to her mind at that moment. He did not care for her, she felt certain of that; he

had not even wished to help her; he had always been a little disdainful of her passionate interest in the Catholic Church. Peggy had never tried to analyze her own feeling for him; she only knew that she was a little afraid of him, of his sternness, his strength, that roughness which was so wounding in his speech. Why should she think of Morford now when her father harshly demanded what man was trying to dissuade her from marrying Hugh? There was no Claude Vernon in her case, no young and ardent lover pleading his cause as Claude had pleaded his with Beatrice. There could not possibly be anything in her feeling for Morford that could prevent her from falling in love with and marrying another man. Peggy chased the very possibility of such a thing from her mind as soon as the thought presented itself. It was impossible—a man whom she had only seen twice! A man who had not been kind or agreeable at all, but who had flung hard truths at her.

“There is no other man,” she repeated.

“That is not true!” said Sir John with cold violence. “There *is* a man—the one you stayed with in Somersetshire last winter when you and Peter met with that motor accident and the car had to be dug out of a drift. Your mother has told me about him, and I only wish she had told me about him before. I know how conspicuous you made yourself at the Hunt Ball Beatrice took you to. She sent you home because the man was still in the neighborhood, and she refused to have the responsibility of looking after you any more. I daresay these incidents sound trivial

in themselves—young girls are often indiscreet and you are singularly childish and unformed for your age. But it happens to be the only instance in which you have ever displayed the slightest preference for or interest in any particular man. We are obliged, therefore, to believe that you have a preference for this Mr. Morford and that there may even exist a secret understanding between you!”

During this speech, delivered almost in the manner of an oration, Peggy stood transfixed and motionless before her father, as if her feet were glued to the ground. It seemed to her that the very secrets of her heart—secrets upon which she had never dared to look—were being torn ruthlessly from her, and contemptuously exposed to common view. That conversation with Morford, which had been intimate only on the spiritual plane, was being criticized and regarded as if it were a mere vulgar flirtation. The evidence against her had been carefully sifted and collated, and as her father proceeded to elaborate it like an accusing counsel she felt that curious and dreadful sinking of the heart which so often precedes the materialization of some acutely apprehensive fear. She had striven to hide from herself the profound influence that Morford had gained over her during those two interviews, and now she could not but see that this knowledge was securely in the possession of her parents. But they had not yet, she hoped, penetrated to the heart of that secret, and discovered the reason of that influence which had governed her daily life during these past months. Her

father's next words roughly dispelled that illusion.

"This man is, I understand, a Roman Catholic. Whether he is in love with you I do not know, but it is quite certain he believes that you will have a *dot* equal to that of your sisters. And your mother assures me that he is further exerting his influence to proselytize—that you have already spoken to her on the subject—that you have even attended services in a Roman Catholic church, although you must have been perfectly aware of our attitude toward them. This conduct of yours needs no comment. We have often had to find fault with you and correct you for insubordination and disobedience in the past, but I hoped as you grew older you would become wiser and more docile. That has, unfortunately, proved a false hope. You have refused a man—good and excellent and devoted to you. That is in itself perfectly excusable, although you certainly led us to believe that you intended to accept him. But you have in addition to this shown a horrible preference for a man beneath you in social position, practising a religion of which we highly disapprove. You are continually engaged in thwarting and defying us. I should place myself in the wrong if I deceived you on the point. Unless you marry with our consent and approval you shall never receive a penny piece from me, either now or after my death. And if you become a Roman Catholic you will equally forfeit any participation in my wealth, and you shall never from the day you become one be permitted to enter this house again. Do you understand me,

Peggy? I am perfectly serious and I mean every word I say. I only wish I had been in possession of all the facts a little sooner, but your mother hoped that you were learning to regret and repent your folly—she believed that you were going to make amends for it. I am sorry, however, that you were not warned before Quentin came about our attitude toward this other man.”

“It would not have made any difference,” said Peggy slowly.

She was a little bewildered; her father’s long speech had confused her; it seemed to touch so many and such important issues. And all the time she had felt that the words had been like a succession of little hammers beating cruelly and persistently upon her brain. She was still standing, and she felt very tired. But she had always been forced to stand as a child when her father was reproving her. It was all part of the dreadful discipline that governed those occasions.

Although she had been listening attentively to her father, and no part of his meaning had been uncomprehended by her, she seemed all the time to be listening to Morford’s voice saying: “But *you!* What could you do? You would most certainly starve. You might be turned out without a penny. Of course there are people who are strong enough to suffer every imaginable privation for their Faith. But you must forgive me, Miss Metcalfe, if I do most seriously doubt your capability of being one of them!” She remembered, too, the strange look of pity and disdain that had accompanied those words; it seemed to

her now that Morford was really present, so clearly could she visualize him.

Now she was conscious of a sensation of shrinking physical weakness. Was it true, as Morford had said, that she was not one of those strong and ardent souls who can suffer all things for their Faith—who can go to martyrdom singing the praises of God? Was she only, when it came to the bed-rock of the matter, only a rebellious, disobedient, undutiful daughter? There was something drooping and pitiful about her now—slight, childish, weak.

“What has this man said to you to induce you to defy us and behave in this way?” pursued her father, with growing anger. “What understanding is there between you? He must be singularly unscrupulous to approach any one so childish and young and easily led.”

Even now he did not lose his temper; there was something cold as well as fierce in his manner; he had perfect control over himself.

“There is no understanding,” said Peggy desperately. “It is true that I did ask him questions about the Catholic Church when I stayed at the Rest House with Peter last December. But it is not the case that he ever encouraged me or tried to—to proselytize. Indeed—indeed, he did not wish to speak to me about these things at all—he did not think I should be strong enough to persevere.” She strained her clasped hands to her heart as if to check its wild beating. “It was I who asked—who begged him to explain.”

“That is not the version Beatrice gave,” said Sir John; “she said that he never took the slight-

est notice of any one in the room but yourself. He made you conspicuous the whole evening by his attentions. Do not tell me that a man would permit himself to be detained by any woman for two hours, answering questions that he did not want to answer, unless he *wished* to be there. This man has used his influence for some special reason; he is either trying to marry you for your supposed fortune or he is one of those fanatics that must always proselytize whenever he can find any one weak and silly enough to listen to him. But I am convinced the first hypothesis is the correct one."

"I am quite sure he could not possibly wish to marry me," said Peggy in a low voice; "he has only seen me twice and I am sure he does not like me. I think he even disliked me if he thought about me at all! And he was not encouraging when I asked him about the Catholic Church. I do not think that he wished to tell me about it."

Sir John had small sense of humor at the best of times, and at present his anger eclipsed all that he might possess, or surely this naïve statement must have wrung an unwilling smile from him.

"You are convicted by your own words," he went on, "of having wilfully played with forbidden things. You actually took the first opportunity you had ever had of making inquiries about the Roman Catholic Church. Once for all, Peggy, I forbid it!" He raised his voice. "Do you hear? I forbid it!" He rose and came a step toward her almost menacingly. Peggy had a moment's dreadful fear that he was going to

strike her. "You are very wicked and ungrateful and disobedient! Whatever this man has said or not said to you, I can see that he is exerting an unholy influence over you. You shall never see him again. I do not believe what you say of him. Either he has made love to you or he is trying to entrap you. Remember what I have told you to-day. I mean every word of it. If you disobey me in either of these respects you will suffer very heavily for it. As it is, your mother will see that your liberty is curtailed. You will not leave home or go about by yourself—you shall not even visit your sisters. We shall keep you here so that you will have no opportunity of getting into mischief and ruining your own life."

"Please may I go, father?" said Peggy. She was trembling now with fear. His raised voice, his threatening attitude seemed to deprive her of all courage. What were these dreadful things he believed of Morford—a man he had never seen? That they might quite possibly be true seemed to take all hope out of her heart.

"Yes, you can go now. Think over what I have said. And do not come downstairs again to-day. You have upset your mother very much, and I do not choose to have her disturbed by your presence."

Peggy went up to the schoolroom. Her eyes were smarting with the tears she had been too proud to shed. The interview had been much worse than she had expected; in all her life she had never seen Sir John so angry before. It had lasted longer, too, than she had expected, and it had unnerved her a little. But it had served one

purpose—it had made Peggy envisage quite clearly her own attitude toward Frederick Morford.

Whether she loved him or not she could not tell. There was too much fear mixed up in her feeling for him. Surely that strange unrest, that trembling excitement which his presence provoked, could not be called love. She had honestly believed that she had only been so delighted to see him again because she longed to speak to him of her experience at the Rest House and to question him anew about those things she wished so passionately to learn. But her father's words had torn every shred of self-deception from her mind. She saw one fact quite clearly, and that was that while Morford was in the world she could never marry another man. Not Hugh—not anybody. She had never known this until now, and she was still uncertain of her love for him. But before she could ever marry any one else she would have to forget Morford utterly—his face, his words, his strong, almost fierce personality. And she was nothing to him at all—in spite of all that Hugh and Beatrice and her father had said. She knew quite well that he did not like her at all. Her very questions had aroused within him a certain ironic irritability. He never seemed to take her seriously. She was to him only a silly, spoiled child, impossibly indulged, and in search of a new and perhaps forbidden sensation. It hurt her to believe that she was an object of scorn, almost of derision, to Frederick Morford. If he could see her now—her tears, her weakness, her utter want of spirit and pluck, he would be

more than ever convinced that she was not among those who are capable of suffering all things for their Faith.

Perhaps she was unworthy to be a Catholic. And if she were to become one it would be a crowning offense in the eyes of her parents, meriting complete banishment. She would be sent away and perhaps she would never see Peter again—they would certainly forbid him to go and see her or help her in any way. Yes, Morford was right; she was not strong enough. She could face being poor and homeless, but she could not cut herself off from Peter—that would be a sacrifice too great to be borne. And perhaps—this thought came to her now as a supreme torture—Peter would blame her too. Already he was not quite sympathetic about her refusal of Hugh. He would have liked to see her the wife of his great friend. The marriage would have pleased every one. A year ago she might even have consented to it as a natural destiny. This brought her thoughts back to that tremendous starting-place. She could not marry Hugh or any one else while Morford was in the world. The wish to see him, to speak to him, was too strong. She did not love him, but she had felt in his presence that sudden, swift sympathy that has been called—though she did not recognize it as such—love at first sight. She wondered if he had felt it too.

She looked round the room and she saw with renewed interest those photographs of her sisters; it was Beatrice's especially that claimed her attention. Beatrice in her first Court dress—young and beautiful as she had been in the days when

Claude Vernon loved her. But those later presentments with Ethne and Jack and little Verena grouped around her seemed to express a deeper contentment, a satisfaction, a quietness, that the older photograph did not possess. If she married Hugh would she learn to close the book of the past utterly and live only in her children? But Peggy saw clearly it was not only Morford that held her so close a prisoner. It was the long night she had spent last year in the chapel of the Rest House that held her so powerfully. She could not bury that experience, as she would have to bury it if she became Hugh's wife. She could not be false to her own word, that came back to her again as it had done so often before, with all the binding force of a most solemn vow: "Oh, I will come—I will come."

Yes, it was that word of hers that made this proposed marriage so impossible. At the remembrance of it all thought of Morford left her mind. She closed the door and knelt down upon a prie-dieu chair decorated on back and seat with intricate Victorian designs. Mind and heart became utterly emptied of all worldly puzzles and problems and bewilderments. She hid her face in her hands and with bowed head remained for a long time without moving. And as she knelt there in an attitude that was in itself symbolic of her complete submission to the Divine Will, a wonderful peace flowed in upon her heart, healing its wounds.

No one disturbed her. She was not conscious of prayer, only of that inrush of peace that gave

her hope and strength, fortifying her resolution. When at last she raised her head she saw that twilight was beginning to draw thin blue veils across the brightness of the spring sky. In the west there were bars of purple and amber melting to gray. A star, very white and brilliant, flickered above the elms in the Park. Through the open window a breeze stirred, its cold, clean breath touched her face with a reviving, bracing quality. Physically she was exhausted and a little hungry. But the remembrance of her father's harshness had vanished, leaving no scar. She was reassured as to her own strength, her own power of endurance.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE weeks that followed pressure was applied with a new and significant turning of the screw that governed the rack.

Outwardly everything went on just as usual. Sir John sometimes secretly congratulated himself upon the success of his methods for setting his own house in order. There was no word of remonstrance from Peggy, who accepted the novel restrictions of her lot with perfect cheerfulness and submission. It could not be that she was insensible of the pressure, for Lady Metcalfe—restored to an almost complete assumption of complacency—had not hesitated to show her daughter invitations from Diana and Beatrice, accompanied by a mournful regret that they could not under the circumstances be accepted. It had always been one of Peggy's great pleasures to go and stay with her sisters. She was especially fond of Beatrice's children. Last season she had spent two whole months in Beatrice's big house in Portman Square, and had enjoyed a much larger measure of liberty there than she did at home. There were delicious days when Peter came to take her to Hurlingham or Ranelagh; to watch the flying at Brooklands or to spend long hours on the river with him. Sometimes they went to the play together. She was always much happier when going about alone with Peter in this informal way than when Beatrice insisted upon taking her to fashionable func-

tions in huge houses where she felt horribly alone and astray. Now she was made to see that she was not to enjoy these pleasures. Her father's threat about restricting her liberty had been no idle one; it was severely put into practice in the weeks that followed the storm.

In all this it is hardly necessary to say that Sir John and his wife were actuated by no other motive than to secure the welfare of their child according to their own rigorous conception of it. They did not enjoy hurting Peggy—it was simply a necessary measure to prevent her from utterly ruining her life, as it seemed only too probable that she would do if she were not forcibly restrained. They were obliged to take precautions just as they had been obliged when she was a little girl to punish her into submission. It was not a pleasant process for either party, but it had to be done.

“So different from darling Beatrice,” sighed Lady Metcalfe.

Lady Metcalfe corresponded with Hugh, who had taken his broken heart to Africa, where he meant to start a farm in the intervals of big game shooting. Boldly she urged him not to give up hope. Peggy was too young to know her own mind; she would think quite differently about it later on. In a few months, perhaps.

Hugh was more comforted than convinced by the letters. He felt that he knew Peggy better than her mother did. Love is not always blind. Indeed, it can be productive of a very enlightening process, particularly if it is not returned.

Peggy was quite as cheerful and amenable as she had been before that unfortunate episode. Although they did not perceive it, being too deeply engaged in their silent surveillance of her outward actions to care about the interior conflict, she gained in those days many small victories over herself. That self-discipline and conquest did not come very easily to her, but she was considerably helped by the knowledge that she was trying to carry out Morford's advice. And the sense of her own unworthiness to become a Catholic acted as a sharp scourge that stimulated her to fresh effort. And very slowly, very painfully she was learning her first lessons in that detachment which forms so great a part of Catholic life.

She saw that when the time came for her to make her final choice no thought of her love for Peter must be permitted to hold her back. The question had presented itself to her once as a fierce temptation. But she had very soon learned to put it on one side. It was a hard saying—that Divine Word that set forth so plainly the necessity of putting on one side the dearest, closest human ties—but it was one, too, that admitted of no appeal. Peggy did often in those days meditate upon the fact of her own conversion. It had been quite sudden, quite unprovoked and perfectly complete. The truth had been abruptly and as it were accidentally presented to her, and she had accepted it without the slightest hesitation. No convert lives, perhaps, who has not in some sense participated in greater or lesser degree in the blindness that fell upon St. Paul on

his way to Damascus, when he first heard the Voice summoning him to submission. It is a blindness that forces the soul to concentrate upon that interior light so recently vouchsafed and bestowed.

With Peggy there had never been any serious disposition to look backward. But from the day of her interview with her father her resolve strengthened from day to day. She would be twenty-one in October, and after that she could foresee no future for herself beyond the fact that that date would mark her entrance into the Catholic Church.

Her cheerful acceptance of those novel disabilities imposed upon her did not escape the notice of Lady Metcalfe, who felt that the ultimate domestic tribunal had not been appealed to in vain. Whatever Sir John may have said to his daughter—and by his own showing he had not minced his words—the effect had been wonderfully successful in bringing Peggy to reason. They had no reason to find fault with her in the summer months that ensued, and Lady Metcalfe had even been heard to say that Peggy had quite ceased to be troublesome. Her hopes turned resolutely Quentin-ward in spite of past defeat; she thought it would be quite a good plan to take Peggy up to stay with Beatrice about the time of Hugh's return from Africa. His return was to be hastened by the fact that he had been suffering from an attack of fever. Peggy's soft heart would be touched, perhaps, by the sight of a suffering Hugh.

When Peggy first heard the plan of going to

London mooted she felt an indescribable sensation of joy. In October she would be twenty-one and it was in October that Lady Metcalfe proposed to take her to town, ostensibly to do their autumn shopping. Beatrice was spending the autumn in London as she was expecting once more to become a mother, and she was delighted at the thought of having her mother and sister with her.

Peggy had made no definite plans, and the question of the ways and means was for the present quite beyond her. It hurt her to think of all the secret intentions that lay behind her eagerness to accompany her mother. She was naturally straightforward, and to plan and plot in secret were repulsive to her. But she saw, too, that if she let the slightest hint escape her she would not be allowed to leave Mildon at all. It was all very difficult and she had no one to advise her. The only thing that seemed quite clear to her was that she must fulfill her promise made first at the Rest House and since renewed many hundreds of times.

Lady Metcalfe had many engagements in London, many friends to see, much shopping to do. Beatrice was not well, and she often left Peggy at home to keep her sister company. The autumn days were rather wet, but Lady Metcalfe defied weather in her beautiful limousine.

Peggy's opportunity came one afternoon when her mother had gone out with some friends. Beatrice announced her intention of going up to her room to rest. There were plenty of new books, she told Peggy, and as it was so wet, per-

haps she would not mind staying indoors alone just for once. It was only till tea-time, and then she herself would come down again.

Peggy waited alone for a few minutes after her sister had left her and then ran quickly up to her own room. She dressed herself as inconspicuously as possible in a long dark coat and a little close fur hat; then she went downstairs again and out of the front door without any one observing her departure.

She walked very fast until she came to the Marble Arch and there the hurrying crowds seemed to confuse and bewilder her. She almost ran into a little throng of people pouring out of the Tube station. It was raining fast, and her umbrella seemed to get into every one's way. The road was crowded with taxis and motors and carriages of all descriptions, while the heavy, lumbering, motor-omnibuses painted bright scarlet passed east and west with their crowded human freight. She was thankful when she succeeded at last in crossing that road, which is perhaps one of the most dangerous in all London to the pedestrian, and found herself safely inside the Park.

The Park was comparatively deserted except by a few carriages and motors passing through, and here and there a figure hurrying forward like herself under a dripping umbrella. She went down a side path and gained at last the Prince's Gate entrance.

Now she could see the violet dome of the Oratory surmounted by a gold cross outlined against the pale gray of the sky. It was already getting

a little dusk, for in the shortening October days darkness comes early to London. To-day there were none of those beautiful, strange, misty effects that sometimes make the twilight in London so exquisite a thing; all was obscure and gray; and dark clouds promising still more rain were hurrying across the sky.

Peggy paused for a moment under the plane-trees in the Park, watching the stream of life go by—the endless procession of vehicles and people that passed up and down the road in shifting phantasmagoric groups and colors. The stir of the traffic evoked a sense of excitement within her; she liked the feeling that she, too, was forming part of that teeming life. And she was alone—she, who was so seldom now alone! The very sight of the dome—dark, strong, enduring, gave her courage.

Now she had crossed the road and was hastening down Ennismore Gardens. Many of the houses were still empty and the shutters were fastened across the windows, giving them that peculiar, blind look as of unseeing eyes.

She turned to the right and came to the path that leads through the old cemetery with its ancient blackened tombstones. On one side they stood in a row against the ivied wall, but on the other side of the railings the cemetery stretched out for some distance, forming, as such places do, a curious contrast to the stir of life that goes on ceaselessly so near to them. Even on this dull autumn day the grass looked very green, spreading out like a sea between the tombs with their stiff inscriptions and the inevitable text, express-

ive always of some deep human affection or belief in the resurrection of the dead. There were not many people walking along that quiet path to-day; but Peggy noticed those who did pass her almost without being aware of it. First came an errand-boy, basket on arm and whistling cheerily; he was followed by a poor woman carrying a baby wrapped in a shawl. Then came two lovers, their arms intertwined, silent, but with a look of foolish bliss on their pale faces. Now she was out in the Brompton Road, and its crowded traffic seemed to deafen her after the quiet peace of the old churchyard. Opposite stood a row of shops, already showing their lights, as if to attract customers within from the wretched conditions that prevailed outside. Above them loomed tall houses, and Peggy had sometimes accompanied her mother to visit people in the sumptuous flats concealed behind those curtained windows. She paused for a moment on the pavement and then quickly turned. A few steps brought her to the Oratory. It was a Thursday afternoon and already people were to be seen entering the big doors, assembling for Benediction.

Inside the great building it was very quiet, and Peggy scarcely noticed now the stir of the traffic. Far off she could see through the mist of tears that gathered in her eyes the white altar, lying like some precious pearl across the gloom. With an instinct to hide herself from curious eyes, she slipped into one of the side chapels and made her way toward the other end of the church. She passed a large Calvary dimly lit with lamps. People were kneeling before it in silent prayer.

Peggy paused for a moment, then she, too, knelt down and prayed. It seemed to her that she offered her very heart to God.

The beautiful altar of Our Lady came into view as she moved onward. The richness and splendor of it amazed Peggy. Wrought richly with delicately colored marbles, it looked like a wonderful jewel of the Italian Renaissance. But she scarcely paused there now. Trembling in every limb, she began to cross the church until she came in front of the Tabernacle. Then she knelt down and hid her face, bowing low. It was nearly a year since she had been in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and for a few minutes she was hardly conscious of anything at all; she was faint and spent with emotion, and felt as one starved suddenly admitted to the vision of food.

It would be difficult to analyze her thoughts then, perhaps, indeed, they were too sacred and intimate for description. But she was uplifted in a veritable ecstasy of thankfulness. Perhaps the one enduring advantage that the convert possesses over the Catholic born and bred in the Faith is that supreme sense of a personal and individual interposition calling them arbitrarily to the Throne of Grace. This is the miracle that characterizes all conversions. Not all hear the Divine Voice. "*It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.*" Not all feel the touch of the Divine Hand smiting them to blindness of all but His Great Glory. But all must feel that wonderful, mystical intervention directly appealing to the individual alone that brings people by a thousand paths to the door of the fold.

It is surely the remembrance of this that imposes an ineradicable humility upon the convert who recognizes the unworthiness of his own heart to receive this personal Divine favor.

"I want to see a priest," said Peggy suddenly. She scarcely knew to whom she was addressing the words, but a little elderly woman dressed shabbily in black looked up from her prie-dieu and answered her.

"You will find one in the confessional," she said kindly.

"Oh, no—not like that," said Peggy, confused. "I mean I want to talk to a priest, but not here—not to—to make a confession," she added, stammering.

The lady pointed to a bell and notice on the wall. "You had better ring that bell, then, and ask to see a priest in the parlor," she said.

Peggy hesitated a moment; she knew now that she was going to make the first tremendous and decisive step. Her heart thumped against her body; her knees trembled and her throat was so dry that she could only with difficulty articulate. But she had come at last to the cross-roads that led to the goal for which her soul had panted. There must be no going back; there must be no looking back.

She threw back her head a little and with firm step followed her guide into the parlor.

CHAPTER XVI

IT IS among the priest's most difficult duties to assume the task of instructing and advising a convert who, he knows, will be called upon in all probability to surrender home and friends and wealth from the day of his reception into the Church, to forfeit, indeed, all temporal advantages for the sake of the Faith he is determined to possess. And although this is perhaps now less frequent than it used to be, it happens sufficiently often for Peggy's case to be no unusual one. Her father's words had been quite clear, and she knew that he meant every one of them. He was not a man to indulge in idle threats. He had done his best, too, to shield his daughter from carrying out her intention, for he did not wish to put those threats into execution. He hoped that his words would prove a deterrent.

But Father FitzGerald, who came down to the parlor in answer to Peggy's request to see a priest, had seldom questioned an intending convert who was so far advanced in the knowledge of her faith. It is true that her chief book of instruction had been confiscated, but not until she had learned almost all she could from it. She was perfectly convinced, and in her case there was no need for argument or polemic; her attitude was that of a little child who asks humbly to be taught all that it is necessary to know. Peggy's con-

version at the Rest House had been as complete as it was sudden. She had had nearly a year to think it over, to satisfy herself that the step was inevitable, to consider her powers of endurance. The priest gave her some books, and she promised to return when it was possible to do so.

It was nearly an hour later when she again passed through the church. Benediction was just over; the air was full of the smoky scent of incense and the odor of it took Peggy back to her night at the Rest House. She knelt down for a moment's prayer, but she could not remain long. Already there was danger of her being late for tea.

When Peggy came in, having first taken off her hat and coat, Beatrice was in the drawing-room. Her sister did not inquire how she had spent the afternoon; she imagined that as it was so wet she could not have been tempted to leave the house. And although Peggy looked unusually flushed and animated and perhaps a little excited, it never occurred to Beatrice that there could be any special reason for this.

Lady Metcalfe came in much later; she had been out to tea, and she had seen several people whose sayings and doings seemed to interest Beatrice, for she listened languidly as they were related to her. Peggy sat very silent, thinking over her wonderful afternoon, glad to feel, too, that the first step had at last been made. She could not think now of the pain and sorrow that lay before her, only of the great joy that was already beginning to flood her heart. She had scarcely begun to think of what she should do

when she was poor and homeless, but like all untrained, unskilled women, she would probably endeavor to get a post as companion. She had no money, for her allowance had been stopped immediately after her interview with her father last spring. It was no longer considered advisable to give Peggy any money of her own to spend. She had a five-pound note locked away somewhere and that was all she had.

Lady Metcalfe had had some surprising news that day, which had pleased her very much and distracted her thoughts from Peggy's doings, or she would probably have asked her if she had been with Beatrice all the afternoon.

She had received a letter from Hugh Quentin telling her that he had arrived at Naples on his homeward journey and that he would be in town in about a week, as he was going to stay a day or two in Paris. He was much better, he said, and was looking forward to being back at home again. When Peggy had gone out of the room Lady Metcalfe confided this secret to Beatrice.

"I daresay Peggy will have him if he asks her again," said Beatrice; "she was so young before and I daresay it took her by surprise. She's had lots of time to get used to the idea, and it was very sensible of Hugh to go quite away like that and not hang about."

"Peggy has certainly improved very much since your father spoke so seriously to her at Easter," said Lady Metcalfe musingly. "He told her some very disagreeable truths, but it did her a lot of good. She's been very careful ever

since—I think she was a little frightened. And I do hope and trust by this time that that unfortunate Somersetshire episode has faded from her mind.”

“I hope so, too,” said Beatrice. “That man has never turned up again, has he?”

“Oh, my dear Beatrice, no!” said Lady Metcalfe, with a little shiver of horror at the bare suggestion.

“When Hugh comes I shall ask him to dinner. We needn’t let Peggy know beforehand—it will take her by surprise. I shouldn’t wonder if she were quite pleased to see him again,” said Beatrice.

Hope triumphed, too, in Lady Metcalfe’s heart and she seconded her daughter’s suggestion warmly. In the few days that followed Peggy was even given a little more liberty, just to show her that she had begun to regain their confidence. Peggy consequently spent as much time as she dared at the Oratory. She felt that she would be thankful when this hateful necessity for secrecy came to an end. It was necessary and that was the only thing that made it tolerable to her.

The dinner party at which Hugh was to be present was a very small, informal affair, as Beatrice was not well enough to entertain large parties. It consisted only of Lady Metcalfe; Peter and Peggy; Diana, who was passing through town just then on her way from Scotland; Hugh, and, of course, Lord Charsley.

Peggy supposed the party was given for Diana, who would naturally wish to see them all. She herself had not seen her for more than a year, and she was dressing when Diana came into her room to take off her cloak.

Lady Maddinard was a good deal changed since her marriage, and she was far more beautiful now than Beatrice, but less simple-looking. It even seemed to Peggy that her sister was a trifle made up; the pink color in her cheeks was so unchanging. Her blue eyes were very bright and her golden hair was most fashionably arranged. She kissed Peggy in rather a patronizing way.

"Well, my dear child, how are you?" she said, and she looked very attentively at Peggy for a moment.

Peggy flushed a little under the scrutiny which she felt was not untouched by criticism.

"I hear you have been behaving very foolishly," she said in a light, ironic tone. "I very nearly wrote to give you a word of warning myself. However, I am sure you must see for yourself how silly you have been, and I daresay you will be more sensible in the future." She thought that a timely hint at this juncture would not be altogether out of place. It was better to let Peggy know what was expected of her.

She threw her beautiful white brocaded coat heavily trimmed with white fur upon the bed and then, as Peggy made no reply, she said:

"Silent as ever, Peggy? When you were little we all knew that meant you were hatching some mischief! What are you plotting now, my dear?"

She took Peggy quite firmly by the shoulders and looked mockingly into her crimsoning face.

"Please don't, Diana," said Peggy desperately.

She felt as if those bright, searching eyes would penetrate her secret. Diana was far the most intelligent of all the Metcalfes, and Peggy felt afraid of her. In the old days nothing had escaped her, and she had often been the means of bringing Peggy's childish guilt home to her.

"Never mind," said Diana cheerfully, "you shall tell me all about it by and by! Let's go down now—we are late as it is."

She slid her arm through Peggy's and went downstairs with her. When they entered the drawing-room Peggy saw with consternation that Hugh Quentin was there, standing with his back to the fire. He came forward immediately and greeted her. Peggy turned as white as a sheet and her mother mistook the pallor for emotion at this sudden meeting. She watched the little scene with approving eyes. Oh, there was no doubt that all that discipline to which Peggy had been subjected would bear good fruit now!

Hugh greeted Peggy with nonchalant ease. He was changed, for he was very thin and sunburned and looked older, less of a boy. Peggy did not know what she said to him, nor even whether she had said anything at all; she felt miserably confused and embarrassed and Diana's words came back to her with a new and terrible significance. She knew now that there had been a plot, and that she was the victim who had walked

so unsuspectingly into the trap. And the worst of it was the knowledge that they were all doing it as they thought for her good and to secure her happiness.

It seemed incredible to her that her mother should understand her even now so little—should be ready, indeed, to mistake her docility for a sign that on this point of marrying Hugh she was going to yield and obey. The surprise had been successfully sprung upon her, but it only awakened within Peggy a fierce recrudescence of the old rebellion.

She consoled herself with the thought that when Hugh knew of her intention to become a Catholic he would no longer wish to marry her. If, indeed, it could be possible that he still wished it, after her definite refusal of him last spring. Perhaps he had only come to-night to show her how completely he had recovered from that little humiliation. Then the memory of Diana's words rudely dispelled these consoling considerations. His very presence seemed to assure her that he, at any rate, had been a party to the plot, that he was at least a willing if not an eager adherent to the Family Council.

Yes, they were all there, Lady Metcalfe, Peter, the Charsleys, and—Diana. Seen thus together, even if one excluded Peter (who, she was quite sure, was innocent of any conspiracy), they seemed formidable in their fixed and united determination to make her yield. She was to be made to see that all paths were closed to her other than this one which they wished to compel her to tread. She was too young to know what

was good for her or to be allowed to choose for herself. There was to be no attempt to stray from the beaten track of Metcalfe prosperity. And thus united they did seem to poor Peggy terribly strong—almost invincible in their strength. The net was already round her feet; she wondered if she would ever have the strength or pluck to extricate herself.

After dinner Beatrice slipped her arm in Peggy's as they ascended to the drawing-room while Lady Metcalfe sailed on ahead with Diana.

"Darling Peggy," she whispered, "weren't you most awfully surprised to see Hugh again? He's looking splendid, isn't he? If I were a young girl and he were in love with me I should feel simply frightfully proud of him!"

"Why should you be proud of him?" asked Peggy coldly, and surveying her sister with eyes of sick misery.

"To think he loved me and wanted to marry me!" said Beatrice.

Peggy was silent.

"And then it's so delicious to feel that one's own happiness is making so many other people happy," pursued Beatrice.

Still Peggy did not speak. The chain was tightening, like a band of cold iron, pressing against her heart.

She did not speak till they reached the landing. It was furnished like a room, for its width was so great that it had almost the dimensions of a small room. There were chairs there and palms, a beautiful inlaid Italian cabinet, tables with flowers and photographs, and a wonderful

Chinese screen whose faint gilding caught the radiance from the electric light that was subdued and almost mysterious. Underfoot was a thick Oriental rug of delicate coloring.

Lady Metcalfe and Diana had gone on ahead into the drawing-room.

Peggy said at last almost fiercely:

"Oh, Beatrice—why did you let him come?"

Beatrice looked at her in astonishment. Peggy was standing there with her hand resting on the polished rim of a little table as if she were seeking support. Her face was pale, but there was a strange brightness, of excitement as well as of anger, in her eyes.

"Why Peggy, what do you mean?"

For the first time Beatrice's misgivings were thoroughly aroused, and she began to wonder if Lady Metcalfe could possibly have again mistaken Peggy's intentions.

"I mean—it's all useless! I don't feel in the least bit proud of Hugh, and it's more and more impossible for me to marry him."

She almost flung the words at her sister.

"What nonsense, Peggy!" said Beatrice, trying to speak lightly; "of course you're going to marry him. He's a dear and he's perfectly devoted to you, and we all know that you have regretted your hasty action last spring. Mother has appreciated the change in you very much, and realized that it was a tacit acknowledgment on your part that you had been in the wrong and intended to behave differently in the future. She wanted you to have plenty of time to think it over, and she told me that she was certain of

you now, and was sure you were going to be sensible and obedient. You are too old to indulge in childish dreams of romance. Marriage isn't a romance, but with a good man who loves you it can bring you all kinds of happiness. Don't throw away your chance of happiness while you are young—you will regret it afterward. You must believe that mother—that all of us—know best what is good for you!"

Peggy looked curiously at her sister while she made this long speech. Yes, Beatrice was happy; she was sure that she would not now exchange her lot for any other in the world. She was perfectly satisfied, and the prospect of having another child filled her cup to overflowing. Yet far away in the past Peggy had a vision of a girl weeping her very heart out in the old school-room at Mildon only the day before her engagement to Lord Charsley was announced.

Had she utterly forgotten that day of passionate stress? Had it been relegated to the shadows of childish dreams of romance—insubstantial things that had no bearing upon real life?

Beatrice said rather inconsequently:

"Why, when I was your age, Peggy, Ethne was a year old!"

She had always been intensely proud of her motherhood; it was the one thing that mattered. She felt that if a woman had a good husband and children she need ask nothing more of life. As Peggy made no reply Beatrice continued:

"If you are still thinking of that rather dreadful young man you were so taken up with at the ball last winter I must tell you it isn't the slight-

est use. In fact, I know father told you quite plainly you wouldn't be allowed to marry him. The sooner you forget all about him the better. He doesn't belong to our world, and women are never really happy away from their own *milieu*, especially if they exchange it for a lower plane! Diana and I both feel very strongly that if you married him we could never receive you again. Whereas we are both devoted to Hugh, and think you a very lucky girl to have such a splendid fellow at your feet!"

A glint of anger showed in Peggy's eyes at this denigration of Morford. Yet she felt as if those cruel words had smirched the bright memory of him a little.

"So, dear Peggy, I know you will think over what I've said. I'm sure you wouldn't distress mother for all the world. And you will be grateful to us all one of these days—for persuading you—for helping you. When you are engaged to Hugh I am sure he will teach you to care. It's lovely being engaged, Peggy."

But Peggy said in a slow, careful, final tone: "I shall never, never be engaged to Hugh. It is quite useless of you to talk in this way to me, Beatrice."

She followed Beatrice into the drawing-room.

Beatrice went up to her mother and said in a low voice:

"I really think you'd better say a word to her. She's in a dreadful mood."

Diana glanced at Peggy, who had retired into a distant corner of the room and was idly turning over the pages of some illustrated papers.

Lady Metcalfe rose and crossed the room to where her daughter was sitting.

"Hugh wants to have a few words with you after dinner, my dear Peggy," she said affectionately. "I hope you will realize now how important it all is." She lowered her voice. "I didn't care for your manner to him at dinner. Of course it's a mistake for a girl to seem *too* eager and encouraging. But there is a medium in all things."

Peggy flushed under the rebuke.

"No doubt you felt a little embarrassed at meeting him again. Perhaps we ought not to have taken you by surprise. But I felt it would be such a pleasant one for you. Dear Peggy, you know what is before you and it isn't every girl that gets a second chance, I can tell you. I am sure that you are going to make us all—Hugh included—very happy. You know what your sisters' lives are like and how happy they are. That is the kind of happiness every mother wishes for her daughter. I am so thankful it is coming now to my little Peggy."

This speech seemed to give an additional pang to the pain Peggy was then enduring. Her mother, Diana, Beatrice, and perhaps Hugh himself, were all perfectly convinced that she was going to yield to their wishes and marry him. She wondered drearily if it would not be well for her peace to give up those wild dreams and submit.

"I am glad to think you have come to understand at last that we know what is best for you. You see we are older and more experienced and are better judges of what is likely to promote

your happiness. I am sure you will be every bit as happy as Diana and Beatrice. Hugh can give you everything in the world, and you will soon wonder that you ever hesitated!"

Peggy clasped her hands nervously together. Her eyes were fixed upon the floor. It was impossible for her to speak, and Lady Metcalfe, convinced that she was making an impression, pursued contentedly:

"Hugh is more in love with you than ever. He told me he had never seen you look so beautiful. You must not let his admiration turn your head," she went on playfully; "you have had so little compared to what your sisters always received wherever they went!"

Peggy's heart was waging a fierce conflict within her. She had allowed herself to be half-hypnotized by her mother's words until she found herself actually contemplating the possibility of marrying Hugh and sacrificing herself on the altar of their wishes. Almost she saw herself following that line of least resistance and placing her life, her freedom, in Hugh's hands, turning her back forever upon those spiritual dreams which seemed now too far off and remote to be reached by her weak hands. She felt a passionate desire to secure the approbation of all these people who wished her so well, and were only trying to coerce her for her own benefit. And in time, perhaps—not all at once, of course, but when years should begin to deaden the dreams that had been left to atrophy slowly in her heart—she, too, would taste the quiet domestic happiness that Beatrice had found; she, too, would

look back and wonder at her own hesitation. And she would live the life she was accustomed to under those familiar external conditions of wealth, comfort, and luxury. There would be no going forth into that loneliness that awaited her the moment she became a Catholic.

But even as her thoughts traveled swiftly like restless birds over that life that was hers for the taking, she realized the utter impossibility of choosing it. No fugitive vision of Morford rose to confront her now, making that proposed marriage impossible, but the fact that she was a Catholic in all but name. In a few weeks, perhaps, she would have taken that step which was to change her life utterly. Soon, very soon, she would have sought and found admittance at those long-closed doors. It would mean poverty, penury, the displeasure and bitter disappointment of her parents, a confusion of darkness wherein she seemed to see herself wandering homeless and astray. It was the loneliness of it that frightened her, for she had been always guarded and sheltered. Her very youth and inexperience protested against such a fate, so cheerless and so forlorn. The thought that Peter would not be there to comfort her gave it an added loneliness and terror.

"So do thou also learn to part with the necessary and beloved friend for the love of God." Those words from Morford's little, worn copy of the "Imitation" flashed into her mind and made the path become suddenly clearer. The way that had seemed suddenly obscured by deep, impassable mists showed itself like a little thread

of silver. If she did not follow it—she who had bravely put her hand to the plow—she would be false to her own heart, to her own soul. She would have to go through all her life starved as she had been starved during the past year.

“We have often been very anxious about you, Peggy,” continued her mother in her soft, smooth voice; “you have such a different temperament. We saw that we could not force you to do anything against your will. Go into the white drawing-room, my dear child. You will, I think, find dear Hugh waiting for you.”

She rose and then stooped down and lightly kissed Peggy’s dark head. “Dear little naughty, wilful Peggy,” she murmured affectionately, “what an opportunity you have now of redeeming your old bad character. Don’t keep Hugh waiting, my dear child.”

The power of suggestion is one that can not be overlooked, and in the mentality of Lady Metcalfe it became a sharp and useful weapon. What did Beatrice mean by saying Peggy was in a dreadful mood? Why, she had never found her more tractable. During the whole of that interview, which she herself had found so strenuous and exhausting, Peggy had not said a single word. She had listened to her with the most perfect filial respect. There was no doubt that Peggy had become quite reasonable and that tomorrow they would be able to announce her engagement to Hugh Quentin.

“I don’t think we had better risk a long engagement,” thought Lady Metcalfe; “in fact,

under the circumstances the shorter it is the better. Perhaps the first week in December—I am sure I can get all she requires in a month. Oh, it would be a mistake to delay the marriage—it isn't as if one could ever feel quite, *quite* sure of darling Peggy!"

CHAPTER XVII

PEGGY rose quite meekly and went into the white drawing-room. True to her mother's expectations, she found Hugh standing there, his feet in their polished shoes firmly set upon the white hearth-rug. He had just lit a cigarette. The aroma greeted Peggy's nostrils as she entered the room and she felt suddenly an unreasonable hatred of it.

The windows of the white drawing-room looked onto the street, and she could hear the rumble of the traffic as it passed down Portman Square.

"I have come. Mother said you were here," said Peggy simply.

She could see that Hugh was feeling embarrassed too; he was not quite at his ease. A little cinder fell from the end of his cigarette upon the rug. He put his foot on it at once, but there was a faint smell of burning and a tiny brown mark showed on the rug.

Then he went across the room and shut the door which Peggy had left open.

"They did not tell you that I was coming to-night?" said Hugh at last, looking down upon Peggy, who was sitting on a low chair by the fire.

"No," she answered.

Yes, she would be quite frank with him—she had made up her mind to that. She would tell him what she meant to do. That would surely

put a stop to his wish to marry her. Even if he told her mother about it and an effort was made to restrain her from becoming a Catholic, that, too, must be risked.

"I went away because I could not bear to be in England and never see you, Peggy," said Hugh at last. "But they tell me you have changed—that last spring you did not know your own mind. That gives me hope, although when I last saw you you did not leave me much room for hope. I love you, and I want you to be my wife. It has been horrible to me—this long separation—this uncertainty."

"Hugh," she said desperately, "I have something to tell you."

"Whatever it is it can make no difference to my love for you," he assured her.

"When you have heard it you will not perhaps care for me any more," said Peggy.

Hugh was quick to take alarm. Had any one else entered Peggy's life during his months of absence, stirring that untried heart to love? But no—it was impossible. Lady Metcalfe had assured him that Peggy had spent all those months in quiet and seclusion; until this visit to London she had not once left Mildon. Her father had wished it to be so. There could have been no opportunity for her to see and fall in love with another man.

"Will you tell me what it is?" he said.

"I have made up my mind to become a Catholic," she said at last. "I have not told mother yet—I am sure she believes that I have given up thinking of it. I felt sometimes that was why

they would not let me leave Mildon—why they have been keeping such a watch upon me. I have had no freedom at all. I was not even allowed to go and stay with my sisters.” She stopped short. There was a strange expression upon Hugh’s face of horror as well as of surprise.

“A Catholic? What on earth for?” he exclaimed at last. “Who’s been getting at you?”

His eyes searched her face, and suddenly his features stiffened and seemed to grow hard.

“Oh, by the way,” he said roughly, “that weird chap Morford was one, I remember.”

Peggy’s face was a shade paler. At the mention of Morford—and no one seemed able to leave his name out of the matter—she felt a pang of physical pain as if a sword had touched her.

“Is it his doing?” demanded Hugh.

Had the man come back—in spite of all their precautions—in spite, too, of that vigilant guarding of their young daughter?

“It has nothing to do with him,” said Peggy in a voice that struggled unsuccessfully to be steady and controlled. “I have never seen him again. It is most unlikely now that I ever shall.”

“And your father does not know?”

“I have not told him yet that my mind is quite made up. It will be very difficult—he has violent prejudices. He told me once that if I ever became a Catholic he would not let me go on living in his house—that he would not give me any money.”

She spoke tranquilly, and Hugh saw that she did not in the least realize what those things would mean when put into stern practice.

"I should hope you were not going to be so silly as to risk that, then," said Hugh with rising impatience.

It was quite true what her mother had constantly said of her—Peggy was extraordinarily unformed for her years. He felt impatient with her as one is impatient with an obstinate child. He did not love her any the less—there was something charming to him about that childlike innocence of hers, but he did long quite savagely to take her out of harm's way—to make her his own and shield her from wilfully exposing herself to such tragic happenings.

"I am going to risk it," said Peggy tranquilly.

She was now by far the more composed of the two; indeed, it increased her own calm to witness Hugh's perturbation and anger.

For a few minutes there was silence. He was reflecting upon her words that had held so much decision, so much firmness of purpose. He was a rich man, and the thought of Peggy's fortune had always been with him a secondary consideration; he had often assured himself that he would have wished to marry her just the same if she had not had a farthing. But he knew very little of Catholics; they had always seemed to him a race apart, surrounded with disadvantages, and he did not at all wish his wife to be one. And there was surely no reason on earth for her to become one—to take upon herself those disadvantages. Besides all this, it came into his mind that in becoming a Catholic Peggy would give a proof of her submission to the insidious influence of Morford. He was certain

that it was Morford's work, and as such he was prepared to combat it.

"So you see that I couldn't marry you now in any case," Peggy was saying. "I couldn't make the two lives fit together. I—I have asked Father FitzGerald about it, because my mother is so anxious that you and I should be married. I told him," and now she raised her eyes to his in perfect frankness, "that I didn't care for you as I am sure a woman ought to care for the man she marries. He said he should never advise a mixed marriage in the case of a young convert—that it might even mean my perseverance might be tried too much—that even if I had loved you it would still have been a risk."

"Who is this man who has dared to advise you in this way?" demanded Hugh fiercely.

"He is a priest—a Catholic priest," said Peggy.

"You would never have thought of this if you had not met Morford. It is all his doing!" cried Hugh.

Once he had felt a violent, unreasoning jealousy of Morford when he had seen him with Peggy, and now that jealousy surged back to his heart like a dark flood, chilling and wounding it.

"You are not telling me the real truth," he went on. "I told you once before and I repeat it now—you are in love with this man. And now you intend to give him a final and open proof of your love by joining the Church to which he belongs. But do you think he will care for you any more when he finds you have lost your fortune? He has not got a farthing in the

world, and your fortune must have been an immense attraction to him. You will find, however, that you have fallen between two stools—you will have cut the ground from under your feet. You father will never forgive you for disobeying him, and as for Morford, do you suppose he will care what becomes of you when you are turned out of your home without a penny? You will find what his love is worth then."

He spoke harshly. Could she not see these facts for herself? Was she so blinded by her desire to please Morford that she would risk all she possessed for this one end?

"My becoming a Catholic has nothing to do with Mr. Morford," Peggy repeated; "it is true that my conversion dates from the night I spent at the Rest House. Otherwise it has nothing to do with him—nothing—*nothing!*"

"I simply don't believe you!" said Hugh.

There was a long pause. Peggy sat there, motionless and still as a statue. Her little white figure seemed to detach itself from the surrounding whiteness in a manner that no contrast of color could have more perfectly achieved.

"You say your father has threatened to send you away in disgrace if you disobey him. He is a hard man, Peggy, and if he does this you will be alone and poor and you will suffer horribly. How will you earn your own living? You have lived in luxury all your life—you have never been taught to do anything that is likely to help you then. It is a madness you would very soon regret. And it will not bring you any nearer to Morford—if that is what you are thinking of!"

It was an effort always to him to mention

Morford's name; it stirred within him that unworthy, savage, primitive instinct of jealousy. He had always looked upon himself as an extremely civilized man, and he disliked to discover this primitive passion in his own heart—aroused, too, by a man he considered his own social inferior. What could Peggy see in this—this bounder? Of course she was in love with him! That explained everything that even her own people failed to understand about her. This talk of religion was a mere blind. A man had been from first to last at the bottom of the whole business, and her own strenuous denial did not affect the point at all.

His words stirred her pride; she longed to defend Morford from the accusation of fortune-hunting. But she only repeated slowly and with deliberate emphasis:

"I tell you Mr. Morford has nothing to do with it at all. I am going to become a Catholic because I must."

"Must! Why must you?" he said. His impatience was increased by that stubborn obstinacy of hers; he still believed that all these symptoms of religious caprice were the outcome of Morford's influence. No doubt the man was too much of a fanatic to dream of marrying a Protestant, and he had snatched the opportunity given of making love to a girl whose father was reputed to be fabulously rich, while he tried to make her believe that it was only her conversion he desired. Again Hugh longed to carry her away in safety before she could actually commit this mad act. "Why can't you be satisfied as

your sisters are with your own religion? Do you think you know better than your parents?"

"Oh, Hugh, please don't. I really can't explain, and if I did you wouldn't understand me. Do you think the prospect of being poor and homeless is a very pleasant one to me? You know my father well enough to know that when he says a thing like that he means it. As soon as he knows he will send me away."

"This is folly! This is madness!" said Hugh. "You are far too young to take your life into your own hands in this way! Ask Peter—ask any one! You will only be sorry when it is too late. Your parents, as you have just said, wish for our marriage. I have their full permission to make you my wife. It has been my one dream for a whole year. You say that you do not care for me—as a wife should care for her husband. Believe me, Peggy, that love will come—I will teach you to care for me. I want you to put aside all this madness and forgive the hard things I have said to you in my anger to-night. And perhaps later on—if you still wished it—we could see about your becoming a Catholic."

"I am sorry, Hugh. I don't love you and I can't marry you. But I did hope perhaps that when you knew you wouldn't care any more."

There was something so naïve and childlike in this speech that it wrung a little smile from Hugh in the midst of his own misery.

"Did you think as little of my love as all that?" he asked, and he stood there looking with shining eyes at Peggy, trying to understand her and failing completely in the effort. "Do you under-

stand nothing, then, of what my love means? Do you think it could perish as quickly as all that?" he sharply demanded. "Catholic or not, I shall always care for you. If you become a Catholic I am still ready to marry you." He had not been so sure of this a few minutes ago, but as Peggy became more and more remote and out of his reach he felt he would be ready to make any sacrifice to try to win her. "Of course I would a thousand times rather you remained a Protestant. It makes all kinds of odious complications when husband and wife are of different creeds. And there isn't a Catholic church within miles of Westcombe! Oh, Peggy, let me entreat you not to take this step! Wait a year or two longer to convince yourself that it is necessary. You really oughtn't to disregard the wishes of your people. It'll be most awfully wrong of you, and you are sure to regret it sooner or later. Forget it, my darling, and forget this man who has used his influence so unscrupulously to persuade you!" There was warmth and fire in his pleading now, and as he spoke he came over to where she was sitting, took her hand in his and bent a little toward her.

But Peggy freed herself quietly from his grasp and rising, stood facing him.

"I have chosen," she said very quietly, "and I can only assure you that no one has persuaded or influenced me. I am following my own conscience; I am doing what my heart tells me is right for me. I can see without your telling me that it would be far better for my temporal happiness to remain where I am. I daresay," and

now her voice trembled a little, "there will come moments when my perseverance will be greatly tried. Father FitzGerald has warned me that this may be the case. I have never known what it is to be cold and hungry—my body is not accustomed to any privations at all." She held her head proudly. "I know there will be temptations for me, but I do not yet know how hard they may be. But I shall pray for strength."

There was a nobility about her now which he felt he was observing for the first time. And he was aware that this resolve of hers was unconquerable. She saw all that it meant for her of hardship in the future, and if she did not realize all the details, she saw at least that there lay before her a period of suffering, of trial. And the fragility of her! The thought of her suffering touched him to the quick. Yet through it all he saw how little he knew of that beloved heart he had believed so confidently he was going to win.

"Shall you tell your people soon?" he asked. "It seems to me that they ought to know."

"I shall tell them nearer the time," said Peggy. "Although I dread doing it, I long to tell them. They will think as you have thought, I know. They will believe that Mr. Morford has urged me—persuaded me. I do not expect they will believe me any more than you have believed me."

"No—I don't suppose they will," said Hugh.

He felt that he was looking at a new Peggy, one with different ideals, different standards from the one he had known and loved. But she was much dearer to him now, and his heart ached to think of all that lay before her if she perpe-

trated this supreme folly. She was very delicate and it was possible that her very health might suffer. She was the last person to make her own way in the world. Even strong men had been known to starve in the effort. And there was something peculiarly weak and incompetent about Peggy. Diana in such circumstances might have achieved wealth and fame! But Peggy . . . His heart sank afresh as he looked at her.

“Shall we go back to the others now?” said Peggy.

He followed her back into the drawing-room. Perhaps Lady Metcalfe and her daughters had wondered a little at the protracted nature of the interview, and had put a wholly wrong interpretation upon it.

Not much could be gathered from the two faces that confronted them. Hugh's was grimly set; he scarcely smiled as he bade Lady Metcalfe good-night and shook hands with her two daughters. Peter accompanied him downstairs, but he did not even attempt to make any statement to Peter. Peggy could tell them just as much or as little as she chose. After all, nothing could mitigate the fact that he had made a second endeavor to win her, and he had failed even more completely than he had done that first time. Her mind was wholly occupied with other thoughts, and whither these would lead her he could not tell. He only felt amid the general confusion and pain that they would inevitably lead her further and further away from himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

PEGGY went up to her room that night without having vouchsafed any information about her interview with Hugh. She had said good-night and left them all almost immediately after Hugh had taken his departure. She was feeling utterly exhausted with all the emotions of the evening, and she was beginning to see that she would not be able to keep her mother in ignorance of her intentions much longer. The moment for revealing them was fast approaching, and the crisis of this evening's happenings would certainly hasten it.

Nor did Lady Metcalfe disturb her that night. No one came to her room, a fact for which she felt she could never be sufficiently thankful. She had been afraid that her mother would come to learn the details of her long conversation with Hugh Quentin.

Early in the morning when the maid brought her tea a little note from Lady Metcalfe was sent up to her room. "Come to my room as soon as you are dressed. I wish to see you most particularly. J. M." That was all, but as Peggy rose and dressed herself as quickly as she could, she knew in her heart she could not again leave her mother's room until she had told her everything.

She put on a little gray dress and went down with firm footsteps to Lady Metcalfe's room. Her mother was still in bed and was reading the

letters and newspapers that had just been brought to her. She looked curiously at Peggy as she came quietly into the room. How well that dress became her—it was just the shade of gray that was becoming to dark pale people.

“Well, Peggy. Good-morning,” she said brightly.

Peggy stooped and kissed her mother’s forehead.

“Good-morning, mother,” she said.

She felt as if she had already begun to walk stumbly and blindly along that destined path whose sharp stones were even now beginning to wound her feet. Was she strong enough? Would it not be better and wiser to follow Hugh’s advice and give up the idea that seemed to him so mad? Hugh had taught her last night to envisage her future position with absolute clearness. She would find herself in a desperate position, and she would wound the feelings of all those who were near and dear to her.

“I want to know what passed between you and Hugh last night,” said Lady Metcalfe.

“I think it would have been kinder if you had warned me I was going to see him again,” said Peggy in a low voice. “I should have told you that I had not changed. He asked me to be his wife—he was angry when I refused. But I have tried to make it quite clear now that I can never care for him in that way.”

Lady Metcalfe looked at her daughter in angry astonishment. She was about to speak when Peggy resumed quietly:

“I told him that I meant to become a Cath-

olic," she said. "Mother, I have waited until I was twenty-one, and now I dare not put it off any longer. I have had a whole year to think about it. I am sorry to seem undutiful."

"Peggy—you can not mean it!" cried Lady Metcalfe. "You know what your father said. He will never have you in the house again—you will ruin your life and your future—and you will break my heart!"

Confronted by the prospect of this dire calamity, Lady Metcalfe burst into tears. She was less angry with her daughter than appalled by the threatened scandal. What would people say of a girl who was capable of committing an action that should compel her own father to such extremes of severity and harshness?

"It is very wicked of you, Peggy, to threaten to bring all this misery upon us," she sobbed; "we have always been so blessed—so happy in all our children. We have always congratulated ourselves upon the fact that we had loving and dutiful children who appreciated all we had done for them. None of the others has rebelled and disobeyed us. Oh, I am sure you can not really mean it. You could not bring this dreadful disaster upon us. I shall take you home this afternoon and tell your father he must speak to you again. He will show you better than I can how wrong and wicked you are even to contemplate becoming a Roman Catholic!"

"I can't go home to-day," said Peggy. "I am going to be received very soon, and perhaps I shall never go home again. Oh, mother—you don't know anything about the Catholic Church

—how holy and beautiful it is.” She came over to the bedside and knelt down near her mother. “You must forgive me. I shall need your forgiveness,” she said; “it is something that I must do—something that has been too strong for me. I can not turn back now.”

Lady Metcalfe looked at Peggy with eyes that were still full of tears. She had always been just a little less fond of her than of her other children, and she had found her much more difficult to deal with than the others, and perhaps she had not always understood her very well. But she had been conscious especially of late of some depth and power in Peggy that none of the others had seemed to possess. One could never force her into the same groove, the same routine as her sisters. Gentle and pliable as she had seemed in these past months, she now gave evidence of her own right to rule her life; she was as far as ever from submitting to their will. She could not be forced into a marriage that was distasteful to her, as Beatrice had been forced. And with this same determined obstinacy she had set her heart upon becoming a Catholic.

There was something delicate and rather fragile about Peggy’s appearance which did not at all correspond to the strength of purpose, the courage, she was now displaying. She was determined to possess those things that seemed good in her eyes, she was ready even to pay a high price for them; she was prepared to sacrifice home and parents and friends in the attainment of them.

“Did not Hugh say anything to try to deter

you?" Lady Metcalfe said, the tears flowing afresh as she considered the matter in all its appalling possibilities.

"He said a very great deal," said Peggy, "he even said that he was ready to marry me if I became a Catholic."

"And you still refused him? You thought nothing of the great sacrifices he would have to make?"

"I have never cared for Hugh as I am sure one ought to care for the person one marries," said Peggy tranquilly.

"Lots of girls only learn to care afterward. Look at Beatrice and how happy she is now with her little children."

"Yes, but I am not like Beatrice," said Peggy.

"If you had married Hugh you would at least have been provided for, even if your father still refused to make a settlement. That would have been a thousand times better than that you should be sent away in disgrace—perhaps to starve. Oh, you are cruel and callous, Peggy. You don't seem to care at all that you are breaking my heart. Do you suppose your mother wishes to see you turned out of your home like this?" Don't you realize that I shall suffer very much?"

"I am sorry, mother," said Peggy patiently, "I am very sorry."

"It will be such a terrible scandal," moaned Lady Metcalfe, "of course most people will see our point of view and not blame us for our harshness—they will recognize that it was the only thing to be done. But others will blame us very

much for sending our own daughter away. It is not a very pleasant thing to do if you come to think of it, and you are very young and ignorant, Peggy, and there is no one I can ask to look after you."

There was very genuine concern for Peggy in her heart; her maternal feelings were strongly touched; at that prospect of parting, so inevitable yet so forlorn, she seemed to forget her anger and to love Peggy more than she had ever done before. For after all Peggy was her own child.

"I am sure I shall manage all right," said Peggy, bravely. "And no one will blame you for doing what you think to be right." She made a movement as if to go toward the door.

"You must go and tell Beatrice to come to me," said Lady Metcalfe; "I must see Beatrice at once. You had better tell Valérie to pack your things, Peggy, for I shall certainly take you home to-day."

Peggy went quietly away and knocked at her sister's door. She did not go in, in response to Beatrice's answer, but contented herself with saying, in a slightly raised voice. "Mother wants you to go to her room when you are dressed, please." She could hear the children's voices in Beatrice's room; they always assembled there in the morning to see their mother and say their prayers.

Beatrice was extremely anxious—not to say curious—to know why her mother wished to see her. She felt certain that it concerned Peggy, so she rang the bell for the nurse and sent the

children away sooner than usual. Then she slipped on a wrapper of pale blue silk and ran down the passage to her mother's room.

She rightly surmised that her mother wished to acquaint her with the latest developments of a situation that had seemed on the face of it so promising.

When she had listened to Lady Metcalfe's agitated delineation of Peggy's untoward and unexpected behavior, she exclaimed angrily:

"Of course it is this man Morford! I have always felt convinced that she had some one else in her mind. And she probably thinks if she becomes a Catholic it will force him to come forward and declare himself!"

This explanation had not occurred to Lady Metcalfe. Unless Peggy had come across Morford during the last few days in London, when a larger liberty had been accorded to her, there could have been absolutely no opportunity of their meeting. The thought that Morford could have had anything to do with these later developments had never presented itself to her as it had done to Hugh and now to Beatrice.

"Oh, my dear Beatrice, I am sure, however tiresome Peggy may be, she could not possibly wish to marry that dreadful young man!" she said.

"I believe that Mrs. Dalton is trying to make a match between him and her second girl Bridget," said Beatrice. "But then Catholics have so little choice—they are obliged to let their girls make these queer marriages, especially when they are too bigoted to let them marry Protestants! Well, we can always console our-

selves that we have done our very best for Peggy, and it will not be our fault if she comes to the most awful grief. Peggy is perfectly hopeless and you will never get her to behave in a rational way."

"I mean to take her home at once," sobbed Lady Metcalfe, "and then her father can talk to her again. I am sorry for her, but there really is nothing else to be done. He is the only person she will ever listen to. Perhaps even now it is not too late to get her to behave reasonably."

"I think it would be much better to leave her here for a few days longer," said Beatrice, "and let us see what we can do with her. I will get Diana to come, and in the meantime you can go home and prepare father a little."

"She will only rush off to be received," said Lady Metcalfe.

"If she does that you need not have her back at home again," said Lady Charsley, "and it will not make half so much scandal as if she were really turned out of the house. You know how servants talk. Peggy is of age and one can't prevent her by force from doing any mad thing she sets her heart upon."

"Perhaps that would be best," said Lady Metcalfe, "I shall go back to Mildon this afternoon, and you must see what you can do. I am sure Diana will think of something to say. And then if she does get herself received, as you say, the scandal will be much less. No one will know at Mildon exactly what has happened. Whereas, if Peggy went home and had a scene with her father every one would know about it, and there

would be sides taken, and all kinds of unpleasantness would follow."

There was a good deal of reasonableness in Beatrice's suggestion, and it would certainly diminish a scandal which was to all appearances becoming inevitable. Beatrice was always persuasive and tactful, and with Diana's support, her influence might be of use at any rate in delaying Peggy from taking the dreadful step she was now so earnestly contemplating.

Lady Metcalfe longed to save her daughter. She did not wish to see her thrust homeless and penniless from Mildon, and at the same time, she knew that there would be no chance of averting this dire catastrophe if Peggy ended by defying her father. Lady Metcalfe wept a little when Beatrice got up to go away. There was nothing to be done—nothing at all except to try to keep Peggy back, at any rate, for the present. It was all too dreadful to be thought of! Catholics never realized what mischief they were making when they deliberately set themselves to proselytize. And there was no doubt that in the beginning Morford *had* taken advantage of Peggy's youth and ignorance and impressionable nature to fill her mind with these strange, dangerous, foreign ideas.

Lady Metcalfe, feeling that it could only produce an increase of her own agitation, did not see Peggy again before her departure from London that day. She left by a morning train, having consigned Peggy with many tears to the care of her two sisters.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEGGY's calm baffled while it annoyed Beatrice. She was really causing an upheaval that was unprecedented in the sedate annals of the Metcalfe family—annals which so far had held nothing but the honorable records of personal success crowning diligent endeavor; of appropriate (from the Metcalfe point of view) marriages; of daily duties and pleasures and social and philanthropic obligations meticulously performed and fulfilled. To the rigorous prosecution of these obligations the family might well and proudly trace its present prosperity, and ascribe also its position upon that social pinnacle where it so securely and immutably rested. Now that suave harmony, repeated through three successive generations, was abruptly threatened by Peggy, always the least conspicuous as she was the least effective member of the family. It was Peggy, the unsuccessful and (almost) unadmired, who dared to come forward and announce her intention of deliberately defying and disobeying them all, calling down just if severe Olympian wrath and retribution upon her head. It was not that Beatrice approved any more than did her mother of the punishment that awaited Peggy. To pack Peggy off forlorn and homeless without a penny would certainly earn for Sir John a character of almost criminal harshness. He would be accused of bigotry by persons who had tolerant opinions, and it was quite

possible that his action might turn the flood of public opinion against him, and cause it to espouse Peggy's cause. It was all very difficult and perplexing, and Beatrice even shed a few tears when she left her mother that morning and went back to her own room.

And then the culprit who was the cause of all this agitation put in an appearance at luncheon presenting a perfect outward serenity that was, under the tragic circumstances, at once disconcerting and a trifle insulting!

But then, as Beatrice indignantly reflected, that was Peggy all over! She was always the one to display the least concern in any awkward situation she had been instrumental in bringing about. After all, it would not do her a great deal of harm and it might even do her a great deal of good to taste the parental discipline for once, say for a week, and realize exactly what it meant to be deprived of the luxuries and even of the very necessities of life for that period. Beatrice, who could not imagine doing without any of these things herself (it was that same fear indeed which had induced her finally to break with Claude Vernon), considered that one little touch of the whip of want might produce a wholesome reaction in Peggy. She felt that it might even destroy her smiling serenity.

"Dear Beatrice—how kind of you to let me stay on here a little. I am most awfully grateful," said Peggy.

Except for Ethne's presence, they were alone at luncheon. Jack had a cold and was not permitted to leave the nursery.

"I am doing it for mother's sake, not for yours," said Beatrice coldly, "she is worried out of her senses about you. I asked you to stop on just to give her a little respite. You are getting thoroughly on her nerves, what with your refusal of Hugh and this silly talk of becoming a Catholic."

It was as well to let Peggy understand the position thoroughly, and to realize that she was in disgrace, and that Beatrice's only motive in inviting her to remain was to be found in her unselfish wish to relieve her mother of a burden that was becoming impossibly heavy.

"Charsley says you always seemed such a sensible girl with no nonsense about you—he is almost as horrified as I am. You see, it reflects upon us all, and if you are really sent away from home in disgrace we shall feel it as a personal matter that touches the whole family," said Beatrice.

"I'm so sorry, Beatrice," said Peggy. "But it's very painful for me, too, to feel I'm being condemned as a criminal when I'm only trying to do what's right."

"Oh, you will enjoy being a martyr—we all know that," said Beatrice, "but as for doing right, I am sure it can never be right to disobey your parents and make every one perfectly miserable just for a caprice. That is the worst of Catholics—they so easily persuade themselves or let themselves be persuaded that black is white! And if you are only doing this, as I think and as mother thinks and as I am sure Hugh must think, just to catch that Morford man, you had much

better leave him out of your reckoning. People say he is going to marry Bridget Dalton—the tall fair one. It is no match for her, of course—we should certainly call it a *mésalliance*—but Catholics, if they are at all bigoted, can not pick and choose; they have to let their girls make that kind of marriage. And Bridget will have five hundred a year, so, though they will be poor, they won't starve."

She watched the effect of her words upon Peggy. It was only local gossip and probably there was little truth in it, but it would at least demonstrate to Peggy that Morford was not thinking about her at all. But beyond a slight increase of color spreading over the delicious palor of Peggy's face at the mention of Morford's name, she betrayed no sign of emotion, nor even of surprise. What did it matter to her if Frederick were engaged to Bridget Dalton? The marriage would be a perfectly suitable and probably a very happy one. In her maddest moments, when the memory of him held her so strongly that she could almost fancy it had evoked his physical presence, she had never imagined that he cared at all for herself. Indeed, during the short hours of their intercourse she had dreadfully suspected that her importunate questioning had "got on his nerves," so brusque and even irritable had he seemed in his manner toward her. She had always felt quite convinced that he had not liked her at all, that she was to him merely representative of a type he disliked and despised. But in spite of this the impressions that had been so deeply and sharply engraved

upon her mind at the Rest House were still those that irresistably governed her with a force from which she could not escape.

She was certain that those ideals which set religion above and beyond all things, which did not fear poverty but might conceivably fear riches, to which temporal success was a danger rather than an advantage, to which all things were inordinate that occupied the mind to the exclusion of God—were, in spite of all teaching to the contrary, the right ones, the only sound and wholesome ones that would lead the soul, if necessary, through paths of pain and suffering, to the ultimate reward of heaven. There are certain minds to whom the whole Faith is revealed uncontestably as if by a miracle and Peggy's was one of them. In those passionate hours she had spent in the chapel that winter night, Peggy had learned unforgettable truths. She had seen the Faith not only in relation to herself but in relation to her whole life. She was prepared to suffer for it and if need be to die for it. It was to her the only thing that greatly mattered. And with it all, she did feel now a little secret astonishment at her own fixity of purpose, her own changeless resolution—qualities about which Morford had so strongly expressed his doubts. Not that Morford and his opinions mattered to her now. He had passed by, and in passing had forgotten her. Perhaps he only now remembered her as a weak and foolish girl, tiresome in her persistent demands for explanations and information.

Beatrice felt that she was not making much

progress, so she wrote a little note to Diana asking her to come to tea. Peggy found rather to her dismay that she was to be kept in durance vile in the drawing-room all the afternoon. But she managed to scribble a little note to Father Fitzgerald, telling him that matters had come to a crisis and she had been obliged to reveal her intentions, and she hoped, if he thought she was now quite ready, that he would receive her on the following morning. Valerie was entrusted with the note and told to bring the answer back with her.

She was not gone more than an hour and when she returned with a reply that was to Peggy so satisfactory that it brought tears of joy to her eyes, the very fact gave the girl strength to endure that very strenuous interview with Diana after tea.

Beatrice left her two sisters alone together. She had played her trump card by hinting at Morford's engagement, and she had really very little left to say. Besides, the whole affair was beginning to upset her. It was clearly Diana's turn, and she knew that Diana could be sharp of tongue if she chose. Diana was the clever one of the family.

"I don't know in the least what you intend to do in the future, Peggy," said Lady Maddinard, who was looking very magnificent in a dark dress of purple-colored velvet, which was extremely becoming to her, "but of course if you do become a Catholic and father packs you out of the house you must not imagine that Beatrice and I intend to come to your rescue. We should both consider

it very wrong to go against father, so you must not expect us to do anything to help you. But I am still hoping that you will be reasonable and not do anything to distress us all."

Peggy raised her clear brown eyes to her sister's face. It had indeed once or twice passed through her mind that her sisters would offer her a home, perhaps, for a few days while she was looking out for a situation. Now she only said quietly:

"I daresay I shall be able to find something to do, if they refuse to let me go home."

"That is all nonsense, Peggy!" said Lady Maddinard angrily, "you are the most useless person that ever lived. You have never been accustomed to do any little thing for yourself—I am sure you could not even darn a stocking decently. What sort of a companion would you make, or a governess either, for that matter? I do not think you are even capable of teaching quite little children. I should never dream of engaging a nursery governess for the boys unless she had received a proper training for the post. Teaching is highly specialized in these days, I can tell you, and the great thing is to have children properly grounded from the first. You will probably have a very hard time of it, indeed, if you force father to take these extreme measures, and I am not sure that it would not be much kinder if they were to give you a good whipping and shut you up in your room, just as they used to do when you were a little child, until you came to your senses. If you were my daughter that is how you would be treated, and fifty years ago

it is certainly what would have happened to you. Girls were much more severely treated then."

"You really must not trouble about me, Diana. I am sure I shall manage very well."

"I am not going to trouble about you at all. But if you do take this step I shall certainly wash my hands of you. I am not at all intolerant or bigoted on the subject of religion, but I do think it very wrong of any girl to be as disobedient as you are threatening to be!"

Peggy was silent. After a short pause Diana returned to the attack.

"Of course it was suicidal of you to refuse to marry Hugh. You are twenty-one—you have been out three years, and this is the first proposal you have had. You have never been at all a success, socially speaking, and mother soon saw that and gave up trying to take you out. She said it was useless to bring you to town for the season. I was beginning to be afraid that you would never marry, and I was delighted to hear that Hugh wanted to marry you. I never expected you would have such a good offer as that, and we were all very much surprised. It's not as if you were pretty, Peggy. And then you never tried to make yourself agreeable to people. When Hugh first proposed and you refused him we all felt that you were very young for your age and did not realize what you were doing. Mother thought a little time for quiet reflection would be the best thing for you, and you have had a good many months in which to think it all over. And last night Beatrice gave you another chance of seeing Hugh, but it was no use. You did not

respond at all—you only flung this absurd talk of becoming a Catholic at his head. It is not as if we had any Catholics in the family! No one has ever been taken that way, and it shows how unreliable you must be to think that one night—*one night*, Peggy!—spent in a Catholic house should have the effect of making you forget all your early training—all that you have been so carefully taught. Of course, we all know that there is a dreadful boulder of a man at the back of it all, but he is going to be married, Beatrice says, so you can not hope that he will take pity on you and marry you!”

This cruel allusion to Morford made Peggy’s heart beat a little quicker, but her face was even more sternly controlled. No one seemed able to discuss the subject with her without dragging in his name. He was in their eyes the one who was originally responsible for the defection of Peggy, and although he could have now little or nothing to do with her continued desire to be received into the Catholic Church, he was still blamed for his interference in the past. And he was so innocent—he deserved nothing of all their blame! Peggy longed most passionately to defend him, but the words that she would have uttered died on her lips. She seemed to recognize how useless her little effort would be to convince Lady Maddinard. Yet she felt that her very silence held something of disloyalty toward him, who after all had taught her her first lessons in the Faith.

“It is so dreadful to think you should have allowed yourself to be influenced by such a per-

son," continued Diana, "Beatrice says the Morfords are nobodies and are as poor as church mice—it is no match at all for Bridget Dalton, but as she is a Catholic it is perhaps as good as she can expect!"

Peggy said slowly:

"I hope some day, Diana, I shall be able to convince you all that Mr. Morford had nothing to do with my wish to become a Catholic. It is true I asked him questions about it and he answered them—not always very willingly. But he never tried to influence me nor persuade me."

"Peggy," said Diana, very seriously indeed, "I will give you another chance. Come down to Queensworthy to-morrow with me and stay with us and think it all over. You can stay with me as long as you like; and I hope when you realize what misery you will bring upon us all by persisting that you will give up the whole idea. We shall be quite alone—we shall have no one staying with us. You can be as quiet as you wish. I do not wish to be hard on you—I wish to be your friend, Peggy, and save you from the awful consequences. Will you come?"

Peggy waited for a moment. Then she looked up and said quietly:

"Thank you very much, Diana; it is very kind of you. But I can't come. My mind is quite made up."

She rose and stood there, a rather drooping little figure in her plain gray dress.

"I daresay we shall not see each other again," she said as she held out her hand timidly to her sister. "But please think as kindly of me as you

can. Please believe that my reasons must have been very strong to make me go against you all in this way."

Diana did not attempt to take her sister's hand nor did she say another word as Peggy went noiselessly out of the room.

"She must be quite, quite mad," thought Diana, "and I'm not sure that isn't the kindest thing one can say about her!"

It was soon after breakfast on the following day that Beatrice appeared unexpectedly in Peggy's room and found her dressed and ready to go out. Something in her sister's appearance attracted her attention and also aroused her suspicions. She had never seen Peggy dressed quite like that before. That black coat and skirt must have formed part of her ancient mourning for old Miss Metcalfe. It was certainly not new and it was decidedly shabby. On her head Peggy wore an inconspicuous black hat and rather a thick veil which obscured her features.

The morning was wet, and Beatrice could not imagine why Peggy should choose such a day for an early expedition.

"Where are you going, Peggy?" she inquired, trying to speak lightly.

After all, it would have been better to let Peggy return with her mother to Mildon. Her father might have frightened her into submission, whereas she and Diana had only wasted their breath in talking to her.

"I am going out, Beatrice," said Peggy.

"Not—? You are not going to be received, Peggy?" cried Beatrice.

Peggy did not answer. She was buttoning her gloves and seemed absorbed in this minor activity. She did not even look at her sister.

Beatrice caught her quite roughly by the arm.

"Peggy! I won't have it! You shan't go! You're too young to know what you are doing—how wicked it is—how dreadful!"

"Leave me alone, please, Beatrice," said Peggy. Her face was white, she felt a little shaken by her sister's violence.

"You know how furious father will be! And he will blame me for keeping you here—for not sending you home yesterday! You will bring untold trouble upon us all as well as upon yourself. It is such a disgrace to have one's own sister sent away from her home—people will imagine all kinds of dreadful things!"

Peggy turned and looked quite steadily at her sister.

"My mind is quite made up," she said, "nothing can stop me now. I am going to be received this morning. I know I can not go home." Her eyes were bright and hard and her voice was steadily controlled.

Beatrice turned abruptly away and burst into violent weeping. Oh, the disgrace of having a sister turned out of her own home as if she were too wicked to be permitted to remain there! The shame would cling to the whole family—one knew how these things were exaggerated in the course of constant repetition. People would soon cease

to believe the real explanation! And they had always been so proud, they had held their heads so high! The episode, trivial in itself, promised to stain as with a permanent blur the bright glory of the Metcalfe family.

But the violence of Beatrice's grief and emotion awoke no contrition in Peggy. She felt as if now she were being invincibly pushed forward across all obstacles, despite all warnings. Beyond lay something that was still untried by her, but she believed that it was very good.

"I am sorry, Beatrice," she said, "I can't go back now, and whatever happens I shall know that I have done right. But of course it is horrible to give other people so much pain and distress even when it is inevitable."

"Inevitable!" exclaimed Beatrice with indignation. "It is not inevitable! It is only a silly whim—a caprice—you have always been silly and hysterical and strange and not like the rest of us. You have always given as much trouble as you possibly could. We were none of us ever punished as you had to be!"

Peggy had moved toward the door, but her sister's taunts moved her to a sudden anger which she could not repress. She faced Beatrice once more and said:

"Yes, I could never obey blindly, Beatrice, or I suppose I should have married Hugh when I was told to, just as you married Charsley."

She was ashamed of having made this retort the moment it had passed her lips; it was her one little lapse from perfect self-control. She ran quickly back to her sister's side.

"Oh, I am sorry, Beatrice—I did not mean to say anything unkind. Just for the moment I was angry and forgot." She looked pitifully, entreatingly at Beatrice.

But Beatrice did not seem to notice the words nor the little imploring gesture that accompanied them. She was biting her lips as if to keep back her tears. She looked quite strangely at Peggy as she went out of the room.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN Peggy returned to her sister's house in Portman Square about two hours later she saw her trunks locked and strapped waiting in the hall. As she entered the house, Lord Charsley appeared from his study, which was on the ground floor.

"Call a cab for Miss Metcalfe," he said to the footman, and then turning to Peggy added: "Will you come in here for a moment, please?"

Peggy followed him into the room. He closed the door, and then said abruptly:

"Have you carried out your threat and become a Catholic?"

"Yes. I was received this morning," said Peggy quietly.

"You can't stay here, then," said Lord Charsley, in tones that were icily polite. "Beatrice owes a great deal to her father and so do I. We don't wish to offend him by keeping you here. Sorry, Peggy, but you'll have to go. I daresay you noticed that your luggage was ready in the hall."

"Yes, I saw it there," said Peggy a little absently. "May I go and say good-bye to Beatrice, please?"

"No, certainly not," he answered. "My wife is very much upset. She said you were very unkind and rude to her before you went out this morning. I can't have her worried, and she's

lying down now. That is all I think I have to say to you."

As he looked at her he wondered a little at the cool tranquillity of her. He had never seen her look so serene or so happy. He had always liked his young sister-in-law, had treated her rather as if she were quite a little girl. But his opinion of her had changed. She had taken this step in defiance of her parents' wishes. In the past he had been inclined to think that the Metcalfes were a little hard on Peggy; now he saw that probably the treatment had been necessary. The timid-looking little creature had a will of her own.

"Good-bye," said Peggy, forcing back her tears. She longed to see Beatrice once more before she went away. But there was something stern and unrelenting about Lord Charsley's red, boyish face. She held out her hand to him as she spoke, but he did not seem to notice it.

"I believe the cab is there," he said.

"Please say good-bye to Beatrice for me. Tell her I am sorry I said anything she thought was rude and unkind," said Peggy. She had some difficulty in uttering the words, for a lump had risen in her throat and threatened to choke her. She felt suddenly small and young and very helpless—and cold. It was the physical cold that seemed to creep inward toward her heart like a trickle of icy water. She slowly went out of the room and back into the hall. The cab was there, not a taxi but an ancient four-wheeler, and her boxes were piled upon it. She gave the man the address of a convent not very far from the Oratory where

Father FitzGerald had told her she could go for a few days if her sister really refused to receive her.

Peggy had known that she would not be permitted to remain in Beatrice's house. Her sisters had plainly intimated that in this matter they would be firmly ranged on the side of the Olympians—would join in their endeavor to force her ultimate capitulation by the cutting off from her of all the necessities of life. But she had not believed that Beatrice would allow her to be summarily turned away from Portman Square in this manner; without a word of farewell and without so much as a mouthful of food. And she was so tired and cold and hungry! She felt as if she had had a blow in the face. The shutting of the big door as she got into the cab seemed to be drearily symbolic of the attitude of all her relations. She was to be shut out from all intercourse with them because she had disobeyed and offended her father. The knowledge did for a moment blot out the perfect contentment that had been hers since she left the Oratory that morning.

Of course it had not been without its difficult side. To no convert, however young, however innocent, however free from grave mortal sin, is the first confession a very easy matter. It is the first, fiery proof of submission, a sharp way that must be passed before the gates can be opened. And Peggy, sensitive of conscience as of heart, had dreaded it not a little. There had been so many faults so often repeated, with so little serious endeavor on her part to correct them. But Father

FitzGerald had made the whole thing as easy as he could for her, as a wise and experienced priest always can. He was deeply learned in the human soul, and he was aware that Peggy was on the threshold of what might possibly prove a life of great sacrifice. There was a risk about instructing and receiving a girl placed as she was. He believed and prayed that she would have the strength to persevere in spite of it all. And when her confession had been made haltingly, stumbingly, but with a contrition that was almost overwhelming, Peggy for the first time received the grace imparted by sacramental absolution. Perhaps there is nothing quite like the sense of holy joy and peace that follows that first absolution, that washing white of past stains. Peggy had passed through that pain and joy since she had left her sister's house that morning. She felt changed and in some ways much older and more responsible. She had taken her life deliberately into her own hands. That in itself was a great responsibility. She had undertaken new duties and new obligations, some of which she could not forego under pain of mortal sin. But she had knelt for the first time as a Catholic before the altar of God. She had said over and over again with tears of contrition and joy, "*I have come! I have come!*"

That promise, with all the heavy obligations it involved, had been rigorously fulfilled. That there was any generosity in her action never entered Peggy's mind. She had the knowledge—which all converts must have—that all she could

be called upon to sacrifice for her faith was as a mere grain of dust in comparison with the gifts she had received.

Although her heart was sore and wounded by Charsley's words and Beatrice's refusal to see her or receive her again, there was a contentment and happiness in her soul which these exterior hardships could not touch.

The cab had passed down Park Lane, and near Hyde Park Corner there was a block in the traffic and she was delayed for a few moments while a stream of vehicles passed northward. A gleam of sunshine touched the bare, leafless trees in the park and made the grass seem almost vividly green. There were a good many people there, riding and walking. A small child clad from head to foot in scarlet made a sudden diminutive blot of abrupt color. Then the cab passed down the hill to Knightsbridge, and at Sloane Street turned into the Brompton Road.

The convent where she was to stay was not very far from the Oratory. It was situated in a quiet street and was a tall house built of dark brown brick. Father FitzGerald had made all the arrangements for her to stay, supposing she was not allowed to return to her sister's house; he had said it would be easier for her to receive her First Communion there in the nuns' chapel on the following morning.

Peggy felt very nervous when she had paid the cabman, as she went up the steps to the front door and rang the bell. She even had a vague apprehension that Father FitzGerald might have omitted to mention the possibility of her arrival to

the nuns, and that they would hesitate in consequence to receive a perfect stranger of whom they knew nothing. She had just received one sharp rebuff and dreaded a second one. But her fears were quickly lulled, for the lay-Sister who admitted her showed her at once into a small, rather bare parlor, and merely asked if she wished her luggage to be brought in. Peggy answered yes, and that she would like to speak to the Mother Superior. The Sister went away then and left her, closing the door.

The room was rather dark; it looked onto a tiny garden that contained apparently only a few smoke-blackened shrubs, and was over-shadowed by a wall that was built out at right angles. There was not much furniture. A round, polished table with a few books on it occupied the middle of the room. Some chairs were grouped severely round the walls. There was another table on which stood a cheap plaster statue of Our Lady. A large crucifix hung on the wall and a shiny, colored oleograph of Pope Pius X.

It was not long before the Reverend Mother appeared. She was a tall, elderly Englishwoman with a plain, kind face. She kissed Peggy, and told her that she had heard her history from Father FitzGerald and was glad that she had been able to come to the convent. She hoped that she would stay there as long as she liked.

The kind words cheered poor Peggy, who was feeling a little lost and strange in her novel, unaccustomed surroundings. It seemed to her that she must be dreaming, and that she would presently awake and find herself back at Mildon. It

was impossible to think that her father would never let her go back there again.

Presently the Reverend Mother gave her into the charge of another and younger nun, bidding her take Peggy up to the room that had been made ready for her. They climbed several flights of steep stairs, and at the top of the house the nun showed Peggy into a tiny room facing the streets.

"I daresay you would like some books to read," said the nun, "I will go and fetch some for you." She smiled kindly at Peggy as she went away.

Peggy looked round the room. It was small and fireless and very cold. It was furnished, too, in a manner that the veriest under-servant at Mildon would never have tolerated. There was no wardrobe, only a row of pegs behind a faded chintz curtain that had become shrunken and colorless from frequent washing. A threadbare strip of carpet was spread on the floor beside the bed, otherwise the boards were bare and uncovered. There was a small iron bedstead covered with a white counterpane. An iron wash-stand stood in one corner, and there was a cheap painted chest of drawers with a discolored looking-glass standing upon it. Over the bed there was a small crucifix and just by the door hung a stoup of holy-water. There was one or two framed photographs of sacred pictures on the walls. But in spite of its poverty there was something about the room that attracted Peggy. The crucifix and the holy-water stoup seemed to her symbolic of those precious things for which she had exchanged the soft ease and luxury of her former life. They

were the things that were not to be found at Mildon. Sir John would not have admitted "that Popish rubbish" into his house. He would not have had such things there even had they been antiques and curios to be exhibited behind the glass doors of priceless cabinets, as some people keep them.

Peggy took some writing materials from her bag and wrote a little note to her mother. It was not a very easy thing to do, although she imagined that Beatrice had already acquainted her with the fact of her reception by telegram. The little action cost her some tears and she tore up several sheets of paper before she felt at all satisfied with the result. First she seemed to write too much and then too little. Even when she had folded the letter and consigned it to an envelope she did not feel as if she had said exactly what ought to have been said.

"My dearest Mother (the letter ran)—I am afraid that what I am going to tell you will distress you very much. I was received into the Catholic Church to-day. Beatrice says I can not stay with her any more, so I came here. It is a convent. Some day I hope you will learn to forgive me, for, indeed; I could not have acted in any other way. Ever since I learned about the Catholic Church I felt that I must belong to it. I am stopping here till I hear from you whether I may come home, but of course I can not hope that father will receive me now.

"Your loving daughter,
PEGGY."

Luncheon was already over at the convent, for in almost all religious houses the hours of the meals are much earlier than those that generally prevail in the outside world. About three o'clock a tray with tea and bread and butter was brought up to Peggy's room. She was quite glad of the food, for she had eaten nothing since her breakfast and was beginning to feel exhausted. When she had finished her tea she lay down on the bed and as long as the light lasted she read the books the nun had brought for her. Among them was Mother Loyola's "Welcome," and Peggy found in it something at once absorbing and peculiarly fitted to her own case—this simple instruction for a child who is about to receive its First Communion. Although it was written expressly for children there was something in the book that fascinated Peggy; she read it through from beginning to end. It seemed to her when she had finished it that it had taught her a great deal more about the joy that awaited her on the following day.

Then it became too dark to read. A candle and matches stood by the bedside; there was no gas or electric light in the room. But Peggy did not light the candle. She was tired and very drowsy; she turned her head on the pillow and fell asleep. And in her sleep she had the same dream that she had once before—she dreamed that she was wandering in the darkness and cold with Peter by her side and a third figure whose face she could not see. But this time, instead of remaining obscure and invisible, the face was suddenly turned toward her, and she saw that it be-

longed to Frederick Morford and he was leading her to the door of the Rest House.

Perhaps it was this dream which first put it into Peggy's head to go down to the Rest House and see Mary Morford again and talk things over with her, supposing she was not allowed to return to Mildon. It would be all the easier to do this now that she knew Morford was going to marry Bridget Dalton. Without this knowledge Peggy felt it would have been impossible to seek Mary Morford now. Every one had been so ready to believe that it was Frederick's influence that had induced her to become a Catholic; it was quite clear, too, that they all believed that she had fallen in love with him. This would have made her nervous and self-conscious about approaching him, but now that she was convinced he was not thinking of her at all—had never, indeed, thought of her in that way—it made it seem quite the most natural thing for her to seek out these people in whose house she had had her first lessons in the Faith.

When Peggy went downstairs to supper that night she found quite a number of people sitting at the long table in the dining-room. She slipped into a vacant place, feeling far too shy and embarrassed to speak to any one.

Presently she glanced at her next-door neighbor and found that she did not look at all an alarming person, being a girl scarcely older than herself. Their eyes met and she said to Peggy:

"Have you been here long? I only came to-day."

"I have only just come myself," said Peggy.

"I wonder if the food is decent," said the girl as a plate of soup was set in front of her.

Peggy could offer no information on the point, and presently her companion said:

"Is this the first time you've been here?"

"Yes," said Peggy.

"Do you mean to stay long?"

"I—I'm not sure. But I suppose until I've found something to do." She paused a moment and then said: "You see, I have only just become a Catholic—I was received to-day."

"How odd that must be," said the girl, looking at Peggy with some curiosity, "I've always been one myself. But there are lots of converts here, and some of them have homes they can't go to."

"I'm afraid that's what will happen to me," said Peggy.

"Although the girl had a brusque, offhand manner, she could not help liking her; there was something kind about her light eyes as she looked at Peggy. She was plain and shabbily dressed and had pale, sandy hair and a freckled complexion. Peggy noticed, too, that she was not very neat; her hair was untidy and there was a button missing on her blouse.

"Oh, that's bad luck!" she said in a sympathetic tone that went to Peggy's heart and almost brought the tears to her eyes, "but I daresay you'll soon get something to do. You could easily get a place as companion—perhaps to some rich lady. People like to have a pretty, well-dressed companion to go about with them."

Peggy flushed a little at the implied compliment.

"My name's Monica West," she presently informed Peggy, "will you tell me yours?"

"Peggy Metcalfe," said Peggy, with a smile.

"You must ask Reverend Mother to try and find something for you. People often come to her if they want governesses and companions. She is awfully kind and takes no end of trouble, especially if one's a homeless convert. Some friends of ours have told me so."

"You're not looking for anything?" asked Peggy. She thought Miss West seemed a very capable and competent girl, well able to look after herself.

"Oh, no—I'm going to work at a studio. I won a scholarship for painting in the North where we live, and so I came to study in London. Do you paint at all?"

"Oh, no; I can't do anything. My sister said I shouldn't even be qualified to teach little children. People want trained governesses with certificates and all that."

"What a pity! And people generally expect their companions to be musical. But I'm sure you'll get on all right," said Miss West.

She looked with frank envy at Peggy's pretty, dainty blouse.

"I suppose you were pretty well off at home?" she said, "that will make it harder for you now. You must have lots of pluck, though, to become a Catholic when your people disapproved. I have sometimes almost wished I wasn't one. Oh,

don't think me very wicked—but it's ofter rather a bore. For instance, when I'd won the scholarship, I was dreadfully afraid I shouldn't be allowed to come to London. Such a fuss and bother! Our priest was consulted and at first he was awfully against it—said I was too young to be in town on my own and all that. Mother was on the point of refusing, when she heard of this convent, and Reverend Mother has promised to keep her eye on me and see that I don't get into mischief." She smiled and her light eyes twinkled. "We weren't brought up to think much about fame and success and all that, only to be good Catholics and practise our religion faithfully. I made all sorts of promises, I can tell you, before they gave their consent!"

Peggy began to feel deeply interested in her companion, but supper was now at an end; some of the ladies had already risen from their seats and were moving toward the door. In a few minutes she rose, too, and followed Monica West up the steep stairs to her room on the top floor. It was rather nice to find that Monica was in the room next to hers. She liked to think she had a friend at hand.

Peggy rose very early on the following morning, and made her way down to the little chapel. She was there for quite half an hour, a devout and kneeling figure, before Father FitzGerald came in to say Mass. Nearly all the nuns seemed to be present, and the front benches were filled with black-veiled figures, kneeling there very still and motionless and absorbed. Peggy crept into

a corner. She wore on her head a white veil which had been brought to her room just as she was finishing dressing. The nun who arranged it for her, fastening it firmly upon her dark hair, had noticed how pale she looked. She had kissed Peggy on both cheeks and said:

"We are all praying for you."

It was the first time Peggy had been present at Mass since that morning at the Rest House. She was still unable to follow it quite perfectly, but she understood it now and realized its tremendous and poignant significance. It seemed to her, too, that it was the most complete preparation that there could possibly be for the communion that was to follow. Her eyes fell upon her open book and she read these words:

"Oh, for the ardent faith of those who truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burns when Jesus is with them."

After her communion Peggy remained upon her knees for a very long time. She could, indeed, have remained there for hours and hours, as she had done that night at the Rest House when she had unconsciously made her first spiritual communion. She had the sense of safety after a breathless chase and capture which many converts feel—a capture that ends that fierce pursuit when the quarry has no real desire to escape, only perhaps to defer the moment when he shall feel the touch of those Hands from which there can be no after-escaping. It is even possible that the human and earthly part of the personality may have resented subconsciously that prospect of curtailed liberty, that permanent submission to purely spir-

itual laws, that prospective subjugation of the body to the needs of the imperious soul.

Peggy had felt such resistance stirring within her from time to time, urging her at least to contemplate the advantages that were being offered to her on the temporal plane in place of the gifts she was seeking. The body had seemed to protest against that comfortless prospect of privation and penury, just as her heart had protested violently against that wilful severance from those she loved—especially from Peter, who was so dear to her and from whom she had not dared even to take formal farewell.

But the soul, always more urgent in its needs than body or heart, when once it has succeeded in asserting itself, had triumphed splendidly in the case of Peggy. She knew as she knelt before the Tabernacle that morning in deep thanksgiving that she had followed the only possible course. She had been called with loving and mystical persistence, and she had answered gladly and willingly.

"I have come—I have come," whispered Peggy with streaming eyes.

She had no knowledge of the passing of time and was still kneeling there with her face hidden when the nun came and touched her lightly on the shoulder and said:

"I think you ought to come and have some breakfast. It is nearly ten o'clock."

Ten o'clock? She had no idea it was so late. Mass had been at half-past six, and it had taken barely half an hour. Peggy looked up in surprise and saw that the chapel was now quite

empty, everybody had disappeared except herself and the nun who had come to fetch her. She rose and moved slowly out into the passage, having genuflected and crossed herself with holy-water. There was an expression upon her face as if she were a little bewildered, perhaps not quite awake. It even seemed to her that her body felt unusually light and small.

CHAPTER XXI

IT was just after luncheon that day that a telegram was brought to her room. When Peggy saw the fatal orange-colored envelope she felt a strange shrinking at the heart, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly open it. If Peggy's spirit were strong and willing her flesh was almost contemptibly weak. She opened the envelope and drew out the pinkish slip of paper it contained, and read the following message:

"Your mad folly is breaking your mother's heart. Until you can assure me that you have renounced the Roman Catholic religion you shall never enter my house, nor will any one here be permitted to see or to communicate with you.

"JOHN METCALFE."

It was what Peggy had fully expected, perhaps a little more cruel in its finality, but as she read it her eyes grew dim with the burning tears that scalded and seared them. She had a sense of truly desolate abandonment, as if she were completely cut off from all familiar and dear things. She was never to go back to Mildon, never to see any of her own people again. And Peggy had spent all her life at home except for an occasional visit to one of her sisters; she had no intimate friends to whom she could turn. Yet, even when she knew the worst there was no least wish in her heart that she had yielded or temporized or delayed. The bonds had to be cut,

and though she emerged bleeding and wounded from the process she knew she would have severed them with even greater violence had it been necessary. All her life from the night she had spent at the Rest House had been tending to this single end. There had been no desire to evade it. It had seemed rather as if it formed part of her fate, her destiny. No matter that she felt at present this cold sense of isolation and abandonment chilling even her ardent spiritual joy, which to-day had been so complete. Just for the moment the awful nightmare of exile was upon her with such force that she felt it must be a temptation that had been sent perhaps to try to diminish her perseverance. "Of course there are people who are strong enough to suffer every imaginable privation for their Faith. But you—you must forgive me, Miss Metcalfe, if I do most seriously doubt your capability of being one of them." She could almost hear Morford's voice uttering those very words, and the remembrance stirred her pride. She was going to be strong—she was going to correspond to those gifts and graces she had received! She thrust aside those thoughts of her own weakness as if they had been poisonous serpents. She was beginning to realize the strengthening power of those very graces. Had not God chosen her—called her to Him? Was she too weak to fling aside the nets that had been, as it were, her means of subsistence and answer and follow that Voice whither it might choose to lead her? She knelt down by the side of the bed and with her eyes fixed upon the crucifix, Peggy prayed.

A light tap at the door interrupted her and Monica West poked her head in.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she began, but Peggy rose from her knees and said smiling, "Please come in."

There were still traces of those recent tears on her face.

"Had bad news?" inquired Monica, in her cheery, sympathetic manner.

"Yes, I've had a telegram from home. They won't let me go back there," said Peggy.

"Bad luck!" said Monica. "I suppose you feel very lonely and all that, don't you?"

Peggy nodded; she could not trust herself to speak.

"Well, don't feel too bad about it," said Miss West; "you'll find it'll pan out much better than you expect. You are never quite alone and without friends if you're a Catholic. Wherever you go there is generally a priest to whom you can go for advice. There are lots of convents all over the country where you can stay if you haven't any money or friends until you can find something to do. We aren't very perfect—lots of us—but we do look after each other. It makes a bond between rich and poor. It's rather like being part of one huge clan. And a woman I know who had traveled a great deal told me once she never felt alone or strange in a new place after she had once visited the Blessed Sacrament there."

Peggy found the cheery, brave words consoling.

"Now I shouldn't waste any time if I were you," continued Monica. "Tell Reverend Mother

just what they've said and ask her to help you to find something to do. And then if I were you I should go and see the priest who received you and talk to him about it. You are so young that you oughtn't to do anything without asking advice!"

"I will go and see him this afternoon," said Peggy. A great wish to go down to the Rest House, to spend a few days there in the quiet and peace of it, had come over her. She felt, too, a wish to go and make a thanksgiving in the little chapel where her conversion had really taken place. She would ask Father FitzGerald, but she was almost certain he would approve of the idea. Afterward she could return to the convent and try and find a situation.

"I think you had better write a line to them first and say that you are coming," he said when Peggy consulted him on the point. "It might not be convenient for them to receive you, and also they might be away from home and then you would have had the long journey for nothing."

"I will write at once," said Peggy, "but I am sure Miss Morford will be there; she never leaves home. And she is very kind—I know she will not refuse."

When Peggy returned to the convent that afternoon she sat down and wrote a letter to Mary Morford, telling her that she had just been received, and that she had been forbidden to return to Mildon. "I am homeless now," she wrote, "and it would be very kind of you to let me come for two nights. I want to see your chapel again. If it is not convenient please send me a telegram;

if not, I will come by the afternoon train on Thursday."

She had hardly finished when Monica West again tapped at her door.

"Oh, you're back!" she said. "I'm just going out myself. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I wonder if you would mind posting this letter for me?" said Peggy, hastily sealing the envelope. "I want it to go as soon as possible."

She held out the letter to Monica, who took it, saying:

"Of course I will. If I were you I'd lie down for a bit. Benediction isn't till six."

She went away and Peggy took her advice and lay down on the bed. It was very cold in her room and she put a rug over her. She was glad the letter to Mary Morford had gone and she felt a little thrill of excitement at the thought of going back there. In all this she scarcely thought of Frederick Morford at all. Perhaps, indeed, he would hardly remember her. It was Mary whom she wished most passionately to see, Mary with her serene smile and kind, light blue eyes. She was not beautiful with her square, strong figure, her plainly dressed red hair, her shabby clothes, and yet there was beauty in that tranquil, serene, contented expression of hers. One felt on looking at her that her soul was as clear as crystal, that her mind was too pure ever to have harbored a bad or even unworthy thought. Peggy felt that she could throw herself on Mary's mercy and kindness now, and speak to her freely of all she had gone through since last she had spent the night under her roof. It formed quite a

little history—unfinished, it is true, but consecutive and inevitable. Perhaps Frederick would not even be there to disturb her long conversations with Mary. She hoped that he might be away from home, perhaps staying with the Daltons, as he was so soon to be a son of the house.

No telegram came for her on the following day, so on Thursday she left the convent, taking with her only a little box with just the few things she thought she would require for such a short visit, having packed the rest away in her trunks, which were to be left at the convent until her return.

CHAPTER XXII

THE afternoon train which ran in connection with the branch line from Bath to Hintlecombe left Paddington about two o'clock. Peggy had never traveled quite alone before; she had certainly never bought her own ticket in her life; there had always been her maid or Peter to do this for her. The noise and bustle of the great London terminus confused and bewildered her. She took a third-class ticket to Hintlecombe, which she remembered Mary had said was their nearest station; although they generally used Coldford, which was more convenient in spite of its being further away, as there were better trains. She bought a third-class ticket because she had already spent ten shillings of her five pounds in cabs and tips and she knew the money could not last forever. The train was very crowded, and to Peggy there seemed an immense number of people gathered on the platform. Some of them looked preoccupied, others were attending in a businesslike way to their luggage, many were pressing round the newsstands to buy newspapers and magazines wherewith to beguile their journey. Peggy did not buy any papers; she felt no wish to read. She wanted to think hard during the few hours' journey to Hintlecombe. She got into the train, gave sixpence timidly to the porter who had looked after her luggage and found her a seat, and then she crept into the farther corner of the compartment. She was

afraid of being seen by some one she knew, and of being addressed and perhaps questioned. What would her mother say if she could see her as she was now, traveling alone in a third-class carriage?

It was only when the train had started that any doubt as to her welcome at the Rest House began to assail her. It is true that she had not received any answer from Mary, but then she had told her to telegraph only if her coming should prove inconvenient. It was extremely unlikely that Mary could be away from home, as Father Fitzgerald had suggested, for she had assured Peggy that she very seldom left the Rest House. Still, she began to feel that she would rather have known for certain that she would find Mary at the end of her journey.

The train was traveling through the unlovely western suburbs of London. Cheerless fields spread out on either hand. Even the beautiful Thames Valley, through which they were so soon speeding, had lost something of its loveliness in the gray and bleak chill of the November day. There was a slight fog, too, which blurred everything and seemed to shorten still more the hours of daylight. The river was steel-colored, the woods that clothed its banks were like brown blots, the fields had a sodden aspect. Overhead was a sky of monotonous gray. The distance was quite obscured by the fog. Very soon the day merged dismally into twilight, and as darkness came on a little fear began to creep anew into poor Peggy's heart. She wished that she had come by an earlier train; she reflected for the first time that it would be perfectly dark before

she reached Hintlecombe. How incompetent she was to arrange even a short journey for herself! She had not had time to discuss those details with Father FitzGerald or the Reverend Mother, but she could at least have consulted Monica West, who was accustomed to do things for herself. At Bath she got out and there she learned for the first time that she would have to drive across the town to the Midland station in order to take the train for Hintlecombe. There would be just time for her to catch it, the porter said, but the very knowledge that there was a chance of missing it and of finding herself stranded for the night terrified Peggy. She was feeling very tired and cold and alone; she began to wish she had not left London.

Night had fallen as she drove through the city, but the streets were well lighted and the electric lamps lit up the old blackened houses, and she could see the Abbey standing a dark, solid mass with its fine tower outlined obscurely against the night sky. Boys were hawking newspapers and shouting much as they did in the streets of London, but there was less noise and less traffic. The cab was an open one and it was drawn by a strong horse that went at a quick pace over the cobbled roads. The rush of cold air against her brow revived Peggy and gave her courage. It was a relief, too, to find when she arrived at the Midland station that the train to Hintlecombe had not left.

Soon she was sitting in a damp, cheerless compartment with black, shiny seats and a boarded, carpetless floor that struck cold to her feet. It

was not very clean, and there were crumbs on the seats and scraps of orange peel on the floor, as if people had been feasting there. Presently two poorly clad women got into the carriage. Their clothing gave forth a peculiar odor that Peggy found very horrible. They closed both the windows, and the atmosphere became close in spite of the cold. Peggy, forlorn and chilled, could hardly keep from crying. She felt that she never wished to travel alone again without a maid to look after her and see that she was in a comfortable carriage with hot-water tins for her feet.

The train was late, and it was six o'clock before she reached Hintlecombe after innumerable stops at small stations on the way. Her two companions had long since left her, but other people had got in at different stations and she had never once been alone. All in turn had stared at Peggy, perhaps wondering what she was doing there with her fine clothes and furs. By the time she reached Hintlecombe the rain had begun to fall heavily and persistently. The station was little more than a series of small sheds, and her feet became soaked as she walked down the platform exposed to rain and wind, the chill country air blowing sharply in her face.

"Any one comin' to meet you, miss?" inquired the solitary porter, coming up and touching his cap.

There were one or two large houses in the neighborhood, and though their guests did not normally travel third class, such a thing was not unknown in these democratic days. But Peggy's

dress and appearance were quite consistent with some one on her way to one of those exalted habitations.

"No," said Peggy. Her teeth chattered and her lips were so cold she could hardly pronounce the word. All the excitement had gone out of the adventure and her courage was at a low ebb. "Can I get a cab, do you think?" she asked. "I am going to the Rest House."

In the flickering light of the oil lamp that was suspended above the waiting-room it seemed to her sensitive imagination that a faint look of surprise came over the man's face.

"Rest House be five mile up on the wold," he said. "I doubt if you'll get anything to take you up there to-night. Road's baddish, too, and what with this weather and all—" He shook his head doubtfully. Ideas came slowly to his mind; he was little accustomed to dealing with problems of the sort. People were either met or they walked, or synchronized their coming so as to avail themselves of the carrier's cart, which met the earlier train three times a week. "But if Jebb ain't gone, mizzy, he might give you a lift as far as the Three Lanes, and mebbe you could walk that bit o' the rest. If zo be as he can take you, your box can be sent on by the carrier to-morrow."

"Jebb?" repeated Peggy interrogatively. Who was this Jebb upon whose favor her slender chance of arriving at the Rest House that night depended?

"Jebb's the baker at Stone Cross—four mile away. He's been in to Bath on business to-day,

miss. I'll go and see if zo be as he's started. Jebb loikes his drop before he goes—to keep the cold out, mizzy!”

He chuckled as he stumbled away, leaving Peggy alone on the platform. She crept into the shelter of the waiting-room. It was furnished after the manner of its kind, with two wooden seats against the walls, which were hung with time-tables; a round, shabby table with a stained top on which rested a discolored carafe and glass; a fireplace in which only a few cinders were visible, protected by an iron guard. An oil lamp that smelt evilly also stood on the table; it had evidently been smoking, for the glass was blackened up one side. The floor was wet and soiled with mud stains from the feet of former occupants.

It was a cheerless place enough, but it provided some sort of shelter from the inclement conditions that prevailed without, and Peggy sat down almost thankfully upon one of the wooden benches and waited in apathetic silence. Her physical misery was almost complete and she seemed to be in the midst of a dreadful dream. As she sat there her mind traveled back to Milton, and she had a kind of swift and alluring vision of the library at that hour. When there were no guests Lady Metcalfe often sat in that room instead of in the drawing-room during the winter months. It was more cosy, she affirmed. Peggy could see the generous fire, piled high with logs and coal, and her mother sitting there with a table by her side, to which she would turn occasionally to regard with perfunctory interest the

newest illustrated papers and magazines. Perhaps the tea-table would still be there, loaded with sandwiches, cakes, and fruit in case her father and Peter should require tea on their return from town. She could see, too, the fine carved ceiling and mantelpiece; the rows and rows of polished-looking books—books that no one ever dreamed of reading. And she had forfeited it all! She was sitting here alone in the darkness that seemed to be pressing upon her heart. For she had always loved her home, had never wished to leave it as so many girls do. It had always offered her sufficient interest, sufficient pleasure and occupation, had given her all that she required until her visit to the Rest House nearly a year ago. The sense of exile was very strong upon her then, and a little thought crept into her mind that she did not at first recognize as a subtle temptation. Had she perhaps been wrong in her disobedience, and was God going to punish her? It was a terrible thought, and as she envisaged it she pictured herself returning to Mildon, contrite and penitent, and begging humbly for admission on the only terms her father would accept.

It would have been difficult for Peggy then to have escaped altogether from the sentimental weakness of self-pity. She had gone forth so full of high courage and resolve, so full of passionate zeal for the Faith for which she was prepared to sacrifice all, and then little by little the desolation of the cold and darkness had chilled her heart to a kind of despair. The martyrs, whose histories fascinated her and imbued her

with courage, had only had to face perhaps one splendid and dreadful hour of fierce flame or physical torment before death released them. But she had to face endless days—all the days of her life—spreading out in gray succession—days of privation, want, pain, and loneliness; days of bitter dependence upon strangers. She would know the slow process of wearing down that can subdue the proudest spirit and break the highest resolve.

The rain pattered down upon the iron roof with an almost savage persistence, its steady drip-drip seemed to be beating upon her brain. She tried to think of the Rest House, and of Miss Mary coming out to greet her just as she had done before, but with an increased friendliness and pleasure, as if her coming to them under her new and changed circumstances were just a matter of course. But alas, the Rest House lay five miles away across those lonely and desolate hills, and even if Jebb were propitious, she would have to walk at least one long mile through deserted lanes, exposed to she knew not what of danger. Then the remembrance of the day when she and Peter had trudged through those very lanes together, their feet deep in snow, came back with a strange clearness to her mind. But Peter had been by her side then and she had enjoyed the adventure with all the careless zest of youth. A whole lifetime seemed to separate her from that thoughtless girl of a year ago—the girl whose dissatisfactions were so formless, whose worst troubles had been the childish ones of reproof and punishment, who had only vaguely felt

that something was yet lacking in the midst of all that ease and luxury. And then the awakening! That, at least, was surely an experience that had brought with it a definite message. She was angry with herself now for those fugitive, rebellious thoughts that had assailed her through her very physical discomfort. Oh—he had been right after all—she was one of the weak ones who could not suffer a moment's privation without complaint!

It seemed a very long time before the porter returned, and his appearance suggested he had spent at least a portion of the interim in joining the unknown Jebb in his efforts to keep the cold out. But Peggy had already heard the welcome sound of an approaching cart and had sprung to her feet with a ray of hope in her heart.

"Jebb be waiting, mizzy," the porter informed her.

Peggy followed him down to the end of a platform where a gate led into the lane opening into the station yard. A rough cart stood there and in the obscurity it appeared to her so high as to be almost inaccessible. The prospect of a long drive with an unknown man whose driving ability was unknown to her in such a conveyance made Peggy's heart sink anew. On a high box-seat sat a man with a mackintosh coat pulled up to his ears, and a rough tweed cap pulled down almost to his nose. The purple wedge of face visible between the two garments did little to reassure her.

"Get up, mizzy," he said in a hoarse, muffled tone.

Peggy pulled out a shilling and gave it to the porter. Then with some difficulty, as her fur coat was thick and heavy and impeded her movements, she climbed up on to the seat beside him. The ground looked to her very far away.

"I hope the horse is quiet," she said.

"Quiet as a lamb if nothink don't come along to dizturb un," he replied reassuringly.

They started forth down the hill and along the principal street of Hintlecombe. A single lamp sufficed apparently for its illumination. Owing to the rain there were very few people about. When the village was past, a long hill rose before them; it was like going forward into complete darkness which the two small lamps on the cart did little to mitigate. But she was well on her way now to the Rest House, and even the prospect of doing that last dread mile on foot could not quite diminish her intense relief.

Jebb was not at all communicative, for that is not the Somersetshire way; and even his recent refreshment had done nothing to loosen his tongue. If Peggy questioned him, he responded in a monosyllable. And there was something about her that mystified and perplexed him. She was to all appearances a "voine loidy," as he would have expressed it, and what she might want with the young master of the Rest House was no concern of his. He did not supply the Morfords with bread for the simple reason that they baked their own. "Queer Papist lot who durzn't even go to Church on Zunday like any other Christians," Jebb would have said had any one questioned him about the inhabitants of that

lonely abode. There was a good deal of gossip about the Morfords in the country around Hintlecombe. That they were Catholics—the only ones in that rural district—made their goings-out and comings-in things of unsolved mystery, and seemed to separate them from their neighbors as completely as if they had been Hindoos of an exclusive caste. In native parlance they “kept theirselves to theirselves” and were known to worship the “Virgin Mary” like the idolaters they were. The Church of England parson living in a sumptuous rectory in Hintlecombe and who also conducted a fortnightly service at Stone Cross, adopted a tolerant if slightly contemptuous attitude toward that poor little mission across the hills. The dissenting minister, who had a larger following and who was locally famous as a preacher, was wont to shake his head and murmur dark and ominous allusions to the Scarlet Woman when he heard the place mentioned. The village cobbler, who belonged to another sect and was also something of a preacher, usually contented himself by saying, “We don’t want no popery ’ere!”

If Peggy had been bound for Sir Arthur Denby’s huge Grange at Stone Cross, or the Radlett’s mansion over by Incherton, Jebb would gladly have driven her the whole way regardless of his own convenience on this wet, stormy night. But he would not go a step out of his appointed way to take any benighted traveler to the Rest House.

So at the Three Lanes, a bleak spot surmounted by what is locally known as a handing-

post, bearing the three inscriptions, "To Hintlecombe," "To Stone Cross," and "To Incherton," Peggy was constrained to dismount from her high perch. Her feet sank deeply with a squelch into the mud of the road. It was very dark, there was not a light to be seen and a forlorn terror seized her.

She took half a crown out of her bag (a sum which Jebb contemptuously regarded as incommensurate with the finery of her apparel) and said piteously:

"Oh, please, is it very far? I am afraid I shall never find the way."

Jebb was untouched by the appeal in her voice. Inwardly he thought it might prove a beneficial lesson, "larning her" not to seek the habitations of young men at a late hour on winter nights.

"You can't mizz it, mizzy," he replied with a grin; "keep on down the lane for a moile and a bittuck and you'll see the lights of the Rest House on your left. Keep close to the hedge and you can't mizz it. You'll find the road a bit baddish," he added by way of a parting consolation.

"Zarves her right for being a shameless hussy," he chuckled to himself as he drove off in the teeth of the wind to his own comfortable quarters at Stone Cross, where the missus would have prepared a tasty supper against his return. "Goin' arter a young man at this time o' day! And who'd a thought it of young Morford? Givin' 'imself such airs, too, as if he wur a pattern. Well, well, still waters run deep!"

Unconscious of the calumnious interpretation placed upon her action, Peggy stumbled off down the lane in the direction indicated by Mr. Jebb. She followed his advice so churlishly proffered and kept close to the hedge, but her feet sank deeply into the long grass and she could feel the wet penetrating the soles of her not over-thick shoes. Her skirt was fairly short, but skirts have a habit of growing in wet weather, as most women must have discovered, and its soused rim slapped painfully against her ankles as she walked. The effort fatigued her, for the wind was strong and the rain beat pitilessly upon her. Once a man passed; he was whistling and did not seem to notice her. Afterward she wished she had had the courage to stop him and ask how much farther it was to the Rest House. The mile was a very long one—it seemed to Peggy much more like three—and it was a long time before she discerned across the fields to the left the glimmer of light that she felt sure must belong to the Rest House. She pushed open the ancient five-barred gate, and began her dreary pilgrimage across the rough farm track.

Here the deep ruts were filled with water and her feet splashed with every step she took. Everything about her had become terribly heavy, her shoes, her skirt, her fur coat and the little bag she was carrying. She had long ago relinquished the effort of holding up her umbrella. She was dreadfully tired and exhausted after that long tramp down the muddy lanes.

The light glimmered uncertainly from the grove of trees, and as she approached them the

prospect of shelter made her quicken her footsteps a little. It was so near now—that little haven of peace and rest.

As she went up to the front door she heard a clock striking eight within. The sound startled her. Certainly she must have been walking a very long time, but she had no idea it was so late. She hoped that Mary would not think it inconsiderate of her to descend upon them at such a late hour. Peggy flushed as this thought occurred to her like a vague forerunner of evil. She began to doubt Mary's reception of her; she saw in herself the unwelcome, self-invited guest.

Why should she disturb the tranquillity of these people whom she knew so little?

Now the high branches of the pines were tossing darkly above her head against the thick, starless night sky. Their murmuring was sustained, like the waves of a restless, unquiet sea. Peggy nervously looked up at the house, and saw that it was all in darkness; there were no lights to-night in any of the windows. The light she had seen must have been the solitary one that burned before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. Perhaps every one was away. Her letter to Mary might have miscarried. A hundred sinister possibilities thronged to her mind. In her agitation she almost forgot to ring the bell.

When she did so the sound seemed to echo and echo as if the house within were empty.

CHAPTER XXIII

IT WAS a long time before any answer came, and Peggy was just summoning up courage to lift her hand and ring again when she heard a movement as of footsteps in the hall, and a voice that she could not fail to recognize exclaimed:

“It’s all right, Martha—don’t you come. I’ll open the door.”

The very sound of it ringing clear and decisive made Peggy’s heart beat with an almost sickening violence.

Then the door was flung open and she saw Frederick Morford standing there, his great, broad figure outlined darkly in strong relief against the light of the hall within. Almost instinctively she shrank back into the shadows so that he might not see her face.

“Who is it?” he demanded, and she fancied that she could detect a touch of irritability and resentment at being disturbed at such an unusual hour. “Who is it,” he repeated, “and what do you want?”

Peggy made a step forward and now the light fell upon her face and revealed it, pale and troubled, to the astonished gaze of Frederick Morford.

“Please—I am Peggy Metcalfe,” she said in a trembling voice that threatened to break with fatigue and emotion. It was with difficulty that

she could repress her tears. But if she were to weep now he would surely only consider her a thousand times more weak and foolish than he did already!

"*Miss Metcalfe!*" he repeated, and now there was no doubt about the effect her name had had upon him, for there was both horror and consternation in his voice as he uttered the words with an emphasis that pierced poor Peggy like a sword.

The wind blew a gust of rain against his face and it was with difficulty he could hold the door open.

"For goodness' sake come in now you *are* here!" he exclaimed, and he almost pulled her into the hall. The door slammed to with a crash that shook the pictures on the walls, and Peggy and Morford stood facing each other in silence.

She scarcely realized what a dripping, disconsolate little figure she must look. The water streamed from her shoes and clothes and made little puddles on the worn linoleum of the hall. She was very cold and very tired and extremely miserable, and Morford's rough manner, his astonishment at seeing her, the horrified expression in his face as he had repeated her name, had frightened her. He made her feel that she had done wrong to come—that she of all people in the world was the most unwanted and the most unwelcome!

"Why have you come?" he said at last. His annoyance was increased by his utter bewilderment and mystification; it was as if in his eyes her intrusion were perfectly unwarrantable.

"*How* did you come? But I need not ask that; you must have walked for *miles*."

Even the girl's pitiable appearance did not soften him.

"I walked from the Three Lanes," Peggy said. "A man called Jebb drove me as far as that from Hintlecombe—I could not get a cab. Did not your sister tell you that I was coming? Oh, I am sorry it is so inconvenient, but I told her to be sure and send me a telegram if she couldn't have me."

Morford did not speak but continued to gaze at her in astonished surprise.

"Won't you tell her that I'm here? I came—I was sure she would not refuse to receive me. She was so kind to us last year. And I felt somehow that she would help me. Do please tell her that I've come—don't please send me away. I am so very tired."

The strange expression deepened upon Morford's face, accentuating the rugged hardness of its lines.

"I can not go and tell Mary," he said, "for the simple reason that she is not here. And there have been no letters for her this past week—of that I am quite certain. I have seen everything in the way of letters that has come to the house."

But Peggy was paying no attention to the last part of his speech; her mind was occupied with the single thought of Mary's absence. Why was she away—just now of all times? She who so seldom left home at all. What dreadful mischance was this?

"Is it possible," he continued, "that you are

unaware of all that has happened here this year? My father died," he crossed himself and bowed his head slightly, "last July, and Mary has gone into a convent. She has been gone three months. I knew she wished it very much and I could not be so selfish as to try to keep her here. I am alone here except for old Martha, our nurse, who came to look after things when Mary went away. Even Father Denis is not here—he has been ill and went to Bath last week."

As he uttered this speech slowly and carefully as if to assure himself that Peggy should miss nothing of its dire import, it seemed to the girl that the very ground had been cut away from beneath her feet. Mary was in a convent—Mary was a nun! And Frederick was alone here except for one old servant. Ignorant as she was of the ways of the world, sheltered as she had always been from all knowledge of evil, Peggy knew enough to be instantly aware that her presence at the Rest House was imprudent and unconventional, and that by coming thither she had placed herself in a false and untenable position.

"But I can not imagine in the least what possessed you to come," continued Frederick, and now there was a touch of irony in his voice. "Unless your memory is of the shortest you can not have forgotten the shortcomings of our very limited establishment. It is ten times worse since Mary left us, and I try to give Martha as little to do as I can, she is getting so very infirm. There could have been little to attract you at any time, Miss Metcalfe, but there is less than ever now." His glance fell upon her face with a cold

scrutiny, but it gave him no key to the riddle. "You have not run away from home, have you?" he demanded at last.

"No—I have not run away. My father has forbidden me to go back, and Beatrice wouldn't let me stay with her any longer. I—I have become a Catholic," she went on in nervous haste, "I waited, as you advised me to do, until I was twenty-one. I came of age about a month ago and I was received on Tuesday."

"You have become a Catholic?" repeated Morford in a stupefied tone.

"Yes. And I have hardly any money—they will never give me any more—so I came to see your sister and ask her advice!"

"Why didn't you consult the priest who received you before you did anything so mad?" asked Frederick.

Up to this point Peggy had remained standing, but now her exhaustion was so complete, she felt that if she continued to do so she would certainly fall headlong upon the floor. She sank into one of the stiff, upright chairs and hid her face in her hands. Morford must not see her cry. His anger would only be increased by her tears.

"I told him I was coming to stay with friends—with some people I knew who were Catholics. He told me I had better write first, and I did write the day before yesterday. I can not think why the letter never arrived!" Her voice broke on a weak sob.

Morford paced up and down the little hall in a restless, agitated manner. From time to time he threw a glance at the little figure, so small, so

childish of aspect, sitting huddled up on the high uncomfortable chair. He repressed an impulse to pity so sharp that it smote him like a physical pang. Then he said:

"Well, there is nothing for it that I can see but for you to stay here to-night. I will go and consult Martha and she will come and help you off with all those wet things—you will catch your death of cold if you do not take them off soon. Please do not sit there and cry. I am sorry—but the whole thing is so *impossible!*"

Martha had been his nurse and his mother's before him. She was seventy now, an aged, wrinkled woman, but still active and even autocratic, still expecting to use the authority that had been hers in the days when she ruled over the nursery at the Rest House. It was Frederick who had been the noisy and unruly member of that nursery, but she adored him still as she had always done.

He disappeared down the passage, leaving Peggy alone, and made his way to the kitchen.

"Martha," he said abruptly, "Miss Metcalfe is here; she has walked from the Three Lanes—that brute Jebb would not bring her any further, I suppose, and she is wet through and thoroughly exhausted. She came here because she's been turned out of her own home for becoming a Catholic, and she thought, of course, she would find Mary here. What am I to do? I can't turn her out, and I'm afraid of what people may say about her if she stays!"

Martha was shocked into silence. That a young lady should have come so far alone on such

a night filled her with an anxious apprehension second only to that displayed by Frederick. She had not been at the Rest House when the Metcalfes had found shelter there last year, and she had not heard of the little adventure. There was silence in the kitchen except for the fierce patter of the rain on the flagged path outside.

"You might take her to the Grange, Mr. Frederick," she suggested.

"How could I take her to the Grange? What explanations could I possibly give to them? Lady Denby is the most conventional woman in the world! Besides, they have the house full for the shooting."

"Better take her in to Coldford then, when she's dried her things," said Martha.

"How can I take her to Coldford? You know perfectly well there's only one horse in the stable now, and he's dead lame. Martha—she must stay here and you must look after her."

"Very well, Mr. Frederick," said Martha, in a dogged, decisive way, "stay here she shall and I'll look after her. You leave her to me. I'll make up a bed for her in Miss Mary's room—that'll be the quickest got ready. And then I'll get her a bit of supper. There's no cold meat left and you finished the apple pie for supper and we've no butter, for to-morrow's churning day. But she can have some boiled eggs and toast and a cup of hot tea."

"Oh, that'll do beautifully, Martha," said Frederick, relieved to find that there was any kind of food to place before Miss Metcalfe. "I don't suppose she'll care what it is—she's dog-tired. If

only it hadn't been Jebb. That's the mischief of it, Martha!"

"Jebb can't do you no harm, Mr. Frederick," said Martha.

"Me? Do you suppose I care what Jebb says about me? I'm thinking of her—of Miss Metcalfe—her people are well known."

"More shame to them, then, for turning of her out," said Martha, giving her young master a very searching glance.

"Ah—you'll say that more than ever when you see her. Such a little thing, Martha, such a fragile, delicate-looking little thing!"

Martha filled a large jug with hot water from the kettle and moved slowly toward the door. Frederick went ahead of her into the hall where Peggy was still sitting on the high chair, in the same huddled position, as of one at the end alike of her strength and courage.

"So that's the way, is it?" muttered the old woman to herself. "Well, well, his turn was bound to come sooner or later as I always told Miss Mary, when she couldn't make up her mind to leave him."

"Here is Martha," said Frederick and the tone of his voice sounded slightly more gentle to Peggy; "she will take you up to Mary's room and help you to take off all those wet things. Mind you make a good fire, please, Martha, and see Miss Metcalfe has something to eat as soon as possible."

Martha, competent and sensible despite her years, had soothed his nerves, and he was now full of solicitude for Peggy's welfare.

There was no answer from the huddled figure, but he thought to detect a smothered sob. The sound hurt him and he began to feel that in his first astonishment and consternation he had not been very kind. He went up to her and quite awkwardly touched her hand.

"I've talked it over with Martha and it'll be all right—you must stay here to-night, and I can think it over and decide what you'd better do next. You must have a good sleep." He looked at her as she raised her face, pale and tear-stained to his.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she said.

She stumbled to her feet.

"Please let me go to the chapel."

"No, certainly not," said Frederick with decision, "you must not stay a moment longer than's necessary in those soaked things. As it is, I suppose you will have an awful cold. But when you are ready, if you don't want to go to bed directly, I hope you will come down and have your supper, and then you can go for a few minutes into the chapel."

He spoke in a tone of brisk and decisive authority, which appeared to brace Peggy to effort. She followed Martha across the hall and up the stairs to Mary's room.

About an hour later Frederick heard a light tap at the study door. Peggy was standing there flushed and smiling.

"I have come to say good-night," she said timidly, "I have had my supper and Martha has been so kind and—helpful. And now may I go to the chapel, please?"

Frederick sprang up from his seat. He always seemed formidable to Peggy when he thus towered above her, looking down upon her from his great height.

"I will take you there myself," he said and lighting a candle he led the way down the long passage to the chapel. Peggy almost mechanically opened the drawer in which Mary had found a veil for her. It was still there; she threw it lightly about her head. Her face looked charming in that soft black frame.

Then Frederick threw open the door and she slipped into the shadows of the dimly lit chapel beyond. She knelt down, and it was quite a long time before she perceived that Frederick had not gone away; he was kneeling at a little distance from her, his head bowed low upon his hands.

Presently he got up and went across to Peggy and as she did not stir he touched her on the shoulder.

"Come," he said, "you are not to stay here all night, you know. I am not going to allow it. It is time for you to go to bed."

Peggy rose and obediently followed him. Although his manner had grown much more gentle, he was still speaking to her as if she were a little child. He commanded and very meekly she obeyed.

He paused when they were standing outside in the passage, and watched her as she took off the veil, folded it, and put it back into the drawer.

She looked up at him.

"You can not imagine how much I have wished to come back here and say *thank you*. Because it

was there," she bent her head slightly toward the chapel, "that I first knew I must be a Catholic. You must not think because I was weak and cried to-night that—that I regretted anything. I was only cold and tired and I could not help seeing," she dropped her voice, "that you wished I had not come. But I will go away to-morrow—I can always go back to the convent in London, and I am sure I shall *very* soon find something to do."

Again she saw that strange expression which she could not understand in his eyes. But she was almost sure that he felt a little sorry for her because she was homeless and rather weak and stupid, and unable to take care of herself.

But he only led the way to the foot of the stairs and then held out a candle to her.

"I hope you will have a good night, Miss Metcalfe," he said. "You must ask Martha for anything you want."

He watched her as she went up the narrow, steep flight of stairs. "Poor little girl—poor little girl," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XXIV

FREDERICK sat up very late that night meditating upon the events of the day which had begun for him with all the colorless monotony of his life at the Rest House. The rising at the appointed hour—there was no Mass as Father Denis was away, but he spent the half hour in the chapel just the same, making his morning offering and meditation. Then the daily routine of work from which he had returned about six o'clock; his lonely evening meal presided over by old Martha—and then the coming of Peggy. As he first let his mind dwell upon that unbelievable vision of her he remembered that she had seemed to him like some elfin spirit that had strayed to his house for shelter from the lonely Somersetshire woods and hills.

But that Peggy should be here, under his roof, the Peggy whose image he had thrust so resolutely from his mind that for months past it had scarcely ever arisen to trouble the peace thereof, filled him with perplexity and bewilderment; he could not realize it; it was indeed one of those impossible events that even actual fact can scarcely invest with credibility. Moved by some impulse he hardly yet understood, she had strayed back to seek out his sister, to make her thanksgiving in the little chapel where the light of faith had first been vouchsafed to her.

With harsh words he had tried to shield his

own heart, to armor it against her who had found access to it so easily. And through that very heart of his there ran now a little thrill of passionate triumph that she who had seemed so utterly beyond and above his reach, a remote, inaccessible, yet tantalizingly beautiful creature, should be here of her own will, lodged under the roof he had judged so wholly inadequate to receive her.

She, friendless and alone, had returned to the Rest House for shelter like a little wounded homing bird.

Of course it was not likely that these tragic present circumstances of hers should be permanent. Surely her father, having first lodged his severe protest and harshly exercised his authority, would relent and send for her when he found them unavailing to deter her from her fixed determination of purpose. No man who had an ounce of pity or affection for his child could possibly contemplate the permanent infliction of so severe and sharp a penance upon a young and weak girl. Surely, too, her mother would plead for her, and soften the father's obduracy, and persuade him to receive her again. It was impossible for him to believe that they could be utterly destitute of affection and solicitude for any one so lovely and so delicate-looking. For like many Catholics born and bred in the Faith, Frederick Morford was inclined to undervalue the fierce passion of Protestant prejudice. He could not believe that the sentence would be permitted to continue unrevoked. Some day she would surely be forgiven and allowed to return to that home of hers; she would go back to a mar-

riage that would be in all respects worthy of her, with a man whose fortune matched her own. She had not really come any nearer to him. She was still as far removed from him as ever. Even to-night he ought to try to prevent his thoughts from dwelling upon her so persistently.

Before going to bed herself, old Martha came down to the study to inform him that Miss Metcalfe was in bed and sound asleep. She had had a cup of hot milk the last thing; it often helped people to go to sleep. "And I'll take her a cup of tea when she first wakes," added Martha, "I'm sure she must be used to it."

"Thank you, Martha," said Frederick.

What a comfort that she had been able to go to sleep so soon, after such a long and trying day.

"She's a sweet, pretty young lady, Master Frederick," said Martha after a moment's pause. "Such nice manners—the way she thanked me and begged me not to trouble, and seemed so sorry to disturb us. Well, well, perhaps she's been sent here for some good purpose—who knows? I made her say a Hail Mary because she'd got here safe and sound. And she said it after me like a child."

"Thank you, Martha," said Frederick again. "I'm sure you've done all you could. Good-night," he added hastily. Martha was a great talker and he wanted desperately to be alone, to think things out as he would have expressed it, to make plans for the future, sensible, practical plans that should relieve the confusion of the situation and leave him no space for idle dreaming.

Light came to him at last with the sudden force

of an illumination. There was Mrs. Dalton, kindest of friends, most sensible and motherly of women. Her matter-of-fact mind, her complete want of imagination—two qualities in her which had often irritated him—had never seemed so attractive to him as they did now. She would be the very person to help him, to suggest something that should be at once wise and kind and helpful to Peggy. Her influence might even prove bracing. Of course the girl had gone through a great deal, but she ought to learn a measure of fortitude, and he knew that Mrs. Dalton's kindness was not of the weakly indulgent order. She could teach Peggy, who was still in so many ways such a child.

He forced himself to think of Peggy thus—as a child weak and rather forlorn who needed guidance and help. Not as a woman to be loved and knelt before and worshiped. Frederick shut that aspect of her resolutely from his heart; it must never be allowed to dwell there. He knew better than any one the limitations of the Rest House, its poverty, the plainness and often the insufficiency of its fare, the absolute lack of all creature comforts. He, a strong, vigorous man, could endure to be cold and hungry, but Peggy! To capture her—imprison her here in all her youth and beauty—would be to impose only a cruel fate upon her, a fate, too, that in her present loneliness and destitution she might even accept. There lay a subtle temptation in this thought which again and again presented itself to him. If he were to ask her to-morrow to give him the right to protect and guard her as his own wife,

would she refuse? Would it not offer to her a present solution of that problem of hers, a consolation in her present distress? In the emergency of her need, would she not perhaps promise to be his wife and share with him the poverty of his life?

He put aside these dreams. To-morrow he would take her to Bargrove, and entreat Mrs. Dalton to give her hospitality for a few days. She would be the very person to help him in his dilemma; he felt sure that she would welcome Peggy, the history of whose previous visit to the Rest House had already been communicated to her.

Of course it was most unfortunate that Miss Metcalfe should have come to the Rest House in this unconventional way. Evil tongues might well place a bad interpretation upon her innocent action. There was that man Jebb, for instance, an advanced socialist with a fierce antagonism toward Catholics, a follower of the Stone Cross cobbler, in whose cry of "No Popery!" he was ever ready to join. Jebb had brought her as far as the Three Lanes and had left her to continue the rest of her journey on foot, a fact which might be regarded as a tacit assertion of his own disapproval. It was hardly to be hoped that he would be silent in his criticism of the unconventional situation. Frederick had a man's large contempt for what people might say about himself, but he felt a passionate desire to shield Peggy from the arrows of poisonous tongues. To shield her forever behind the armor of his own name was a thing he dared not contemplate, and he thrust

the thought from him as he might have tried to avert the point of some sharp instrument that was capable of inflicting an exquisite torture. It was impossible; she must never feel even the need for rehabilitating herself in this way; she must never know that her innocent action was capable of being vilely interpreted. She had only seemed to-night to think of the inconvenience she had caused. He knew that he could trust Mrs. Dalton not to enlighten her.

His plans were fully matured in all their necessary detail before he allowed himself to go to bed. He knew that he would not be able to sleep with that high wind screaming round the house and the rain beating and splashing its large tears against the panes. There were many thoughts in Frederick's heart that night, some of them too intimate and sacred to be revealed. It was here that Peggy's spiritual capture had taken place; here that she had known first that divine imprisoning; here that she had heard the words summoning her. And with all her weakness she had answered quickly, obediently, generously, with scarcely a thought for those readily abandoned nets. And he knew that if he could ever win that priceless gift, the love of Peggy's heart, she would care for poverty and privation as little as he did.

He rose early on the following day—it seemed to him that he had scarcely slept for five minutes when Martha's heavy knock sounded at the door. His visit to the chapel accomplished, he went off to borrow a horse for the drive to Coldford. He would not go to Hintlecombe to give another

fillip to gossiping tongues, and besides, there was a train which ran from Coldford to the Daltons' nearest station without change. It would be time enough when they reached that town to send Mrs. Dalton a telegram to announce their coming. She took everything as a matter of course and would, he knew, feel scarcely any surprise.

Peggy was still too tired to do anything but fall in quite readily with all Frederick's arrangements. She made one little protest about going to Mrs. Dalton's, saying it might be inconvenient for them to receive her and pleading that she could quite well return to the convent. Frederick dismissed these arguments with a quick frown.

"I really think you'd be better there just for a bit. You see you've got to get used to things."

If she had been capable of feeling pain at all amid the confusion of so much change and upheaval, she would perhaps have shrunk a little from going to Bargrove. But Beatrice had spoken with so much certainty about Frederick's engagement to Bridget Dalton that she had to a certain extent accustomed her mind to the thought. What more natural thing than that he should under the circumstances shift the burden of herself upon these people who already had such a strong claim upon him? As a future son of the house he could appeal to them for assistance with confidence and assurance in their readiness to grant it.

Peggy had never deeply analyzed her own feeling for Frederick; she had never discovered that the strong influence he exercised over her owed

its origin to her own heart. She had never recognized that the fear and excitement and strange trembling she had felt at his approach were the first tremulous feelings of love in a heart that was wholly untried. She had hoped if she ever married that her husband would think as he did, and that he might perhaps even be a little like Frederick. She had even thought once for a short time before she knew of his engagement that she could never marry Hugh Quentin or any other man while Frederick Morford was in the world. There was no pain in the thought that he belonged to another girl, yet she felt if she dwelt upon it too long or envisaged it too clearly that it might be productive of a pain whose sharpness and extent it would be impossible to measure.

But he had disclosed his plan of taking her to Bargrove as a premeditated arrangement which did not even require her consent; he had waved aside those timidly proffered objections of hers; he had given her to understand quite clearly that Mrs. Dalton of all people in the world was the one best fitted to cope with the exigencies of her own present difficult situation. His own relief, too, at this shifting of his burden to the shoulders of another was so obviously intense that Peggy, feeling she had tried him enough by coming at all, meekly fell in with his wishes. She had, too, the comfortable conviction that he knew best, even if what he had determined to do did hurt her a little. And even if she had been sensible of the hurt that was surely to follow instead of vaguely fearing it, there would still have been a deep and strange joy

in the thought that they were to make this short journey together.

It seemed so wonderful to be traveling alone with Frederick Morford! The November day was beautifully fine, as if the weather were repenting of its insubordinate mood of yesterday. The sunlight lay in pale bars of golden light upon the green slopes of the Mendip hills, and illuminated the soft brown bloom that still colored the leafless woods. There was a soft, almost warm breeze such as often blows in Somersetshire and to which is perhaps attributable its character of having a "muggy climate." The horse Frederick had borrowed was a strong one and they drove along at a swift, steady pace.

On the way to the station she said timidly:

"Is it long since you have been to Bargrove?" She looked up at him under those thick, dark lashes that lent such fire and depth to her eyes.

"Some months," said Morford. "Mary and I went there after my father's death, a few weeks before she went to the convent. It was a farewell visit. You see, the Daltons are really the only intimate friends we have," he added as if to explain this visit, which was an unusual occurrence at least in his sister's life.

Evidently, then, the engaged pair had not met since then—they would have much to talk over with and tell each other. Their separation must have lasted more than three months. But Morford was too poor and too hard-worked to leave home very often even to visit his fiancé. She wondered if the marriage would take place soon. It seemed to her that Frederick had been a little

surprised at her question just now, as if the matter had been no affair of hers. She colored as if she had said something very indiscreet.

"Oh, I'm afraid of going there!" she cried suddenly, as they came in sight of the little gray town of Coldford lying at the foot of a hill. "I am a stranger to them—they can not even know my name. And perhaps they will not like my coming." She looked piteously at Frederick, and he wondered a little why she should dislike the idea of going there so much.

"Mrs. Dalton is an extremely kind woman," he said shortly, "and I know she will do anything I ask her. Besides, you need not stay there longer than you like. It would be better to consult her, though, before you take any steps about going away."

Morford took the horse and trap to an inn near the station, giving orders that they were to be kept there until his return on the following morning. Peggy was standing near when he gave the order, and she was dismayed to find that he only intended to spend one night at Bargrove. It showed her quite plainly that his chief reason for making the journey thither was in order to see her safely installed under Mrs. Dalton's roof, and if he had any personal pleasure in the prospect of the visit he concealed it with the most perfect success.

He had with him only a bag, and Peggy had her little trunk, which had arrived early at the Rest House, brought by the carrier's cart.

Frederick bought the tickets, gave the luggage in charge of a porter to be labeled, and then said:

"Do you mind waiting here, Miss Metcalfe, while I go and send a telegram to Mrs. Dalton?"

"Oh, no," said Peggy. She sat down on a seat and watched the little groups of passengers assembled on the platform. Suddenly she caught sight of a familiar face turned sharply and scrutinizingly toward her. It was Mrs. Gillespie. She was alone, and was dressed in a coat and skirt of rough, grass-green frieze that seemed to increase the odd greenness of her eyes.

"Why, my dear Peggy!" she exclaimed, "what in the world are you doing here all by your little alone?"

Peggy stood up, and her confusion painted her cheeks a flaming scarlet.

"I am not alone," she said, and then stopped. How could she possibly explain the situation to Mrs. Gillespie? Probably she knew nothing of her exile from Mildon. She stood there looking the picture of guilty embarrassment. Oh, what would Mrs. Gillespie say when she saw Morford? His return from the telegraph-office could not long be delayed.

"Why, what's the matter, Peggy?" inquired Mrs. Gillespie smiling, "who on earth have you got with you that you should look so shy about it? Not—Hugh?" And she looked full into the girl's eyes with a merciless, humorous stare.

"Oh, no; it isn't Hugh," said Peggy desperately. She wished the ground would open to receive her.

"I thought you never went about alone—without Peter or your mother or one of your sisters," said Mrs. Gillespie, who had heard that the Met-

calfes were very strict with Peggy and had even wondered why they should imagine it to be so necessary. She had never seen a girl who looked less likely to get into mischief of any kind.

"Oh, haven't you heard?" said Peggy, thankful to change the conversation from the subject of her traveling companion, "I'm not allowed to live at home any more. I—I have become a Catholic."

"Become a Catholic?" repeated Mrs. Gillespie in a tone of scornful surprise; "what made you do such a silly thing as that? And do you mean that they have turned you out of the house? Why didn't you come to me? I should have been delighted to have you, and I would have got Hugh down and fixed it all up between you in no time, so that you would never have had to wander about the country like this! Why didn't you let me know, Peggy? You're much too young to be going about by yourself in this way."

"I haven't told any one yet except the nuns at the convent where I stayed in London, and—Mr. Morford." She uttered his name with a certain timid hesitation that did not escape the attention of Mrs. Gillespie.

"Mr. Morford? And who is he?" she asked.

"He is a friend of mine—a Catholic," said Peggy in a low voice.

"Oh, I see," said Mrs. Gillespie in a meaning tone; "it generally means that, doesn't it?—when a girl suddenly becomes a Catholic. So that's why you packed Hugh off to East Africa?"

Peggy did not reply. Her eyes full of terror

were fixed upon Morford, who was rapidly advancing down the platform toward them. He felt a little surprise when he saw Peggy talking to an unusual-looking woman dressed in vivid green.

"Mr. Morford—Mrs. Gillespie," said Peggy, crimsoning anew and stammering over the two names.

"Which way are you going?" Peggy heard her say to Morford.

"To Freshly—it's in Gloucestershire," he answered.

"I suppose you are going to stay with the Charsleys at Lavender then?" said Mrs. Gillespie, whose curiosity was thoroughly aroused.

What a little puss Peggy was in spite of her innocent childlike airs!

"Oh, no," said Peggy looking up quickly, "Beatrice isn't at Lavender now—she's spending the autumn in town. But in any case she wouldn't let me stay with her now."

"We are going to Mrs. Dalton's at Bargrove," said Frederick rather haughtily. He disliked Mrs. Gillespie's manner to Peggy, and he felt a little afraid of what she might say next.

The train steamed into the station at that moment, putting an end to the conversation. Frederick moved toward the opening doors to find seats for himself and Peggy. Mrs. Gillespie took the opportunity of whispering:

"Well, my dear Peggy, when am I to congratulate you? I don't think much of your taste though—Hugh's far better looking and you could have had a lovely time if you'd married

him. He was so much in love with you he'd have given you everything—everything! Who is this Mr. Morford? Where did you pick him up?"

There was fortunately no time for Peggy to answer this question, for Frederick beckoned to her as he held open the door of a carriage.

"Will you get in, Miss Metcalfe?" he said with a return of his old, forbidding manner.

"Good-by," said Peggy hastily to Mrs. Gillespie.

"Good-by," replied Mrs. Gillespie, "if it's not too late, Peggy, do let me entreat you to be careful. Sir John may not wish to have you back at home but he would be the first to disapprove of your being seen in the wilds of Somersetshire alone with a strange young man. I hope you will reach your destination safely."

Peggy was crimson in the face as she mounted up the steps into the carriage. She felt for the first time that she was doing an unconventional and very strange thing. If Mrs. Gillespie had not evinced such disapproving surprise she would have attached scarcely more importance to the episode of traveling with Morford than if Peter had been her escort. She was only thankful after her experience of yesterday that Morford had not insisted upon her making the journey alone. It was what she had fully expected she might have to do, and she was excessively grateful to him for putting himself to the additional inconvenience of accompanying her. But this point of view had been relentlessly swept away by Mrs. Gillespie's words, and Peggy felt that what she had said was quite true—had Sir John been able

to see her now his anger and displeasure would be increased a hundredfold. She was perfectly aware of the opinion he held about Morford, and if he could see them now perhaps he would feel his opinion was justified. Had he not called him a fortune-hunter who had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience to make the attempt to proselytize her? Had not Mrs. Gillespie immediately attributed her conversion to Morford's influence? Peggy, shamed and humbled, shrank into the corner, trying to avert her face from Morford's stern eyes.

"Your friend seemed surprised to see you here," he said at last, trying to speak lightly, for something in Mrs. Gillespie's manner had jarred upon him.

"I think she was," admitted Peggy.

He wondered if Peggy in her innocence had informed her of yesterday's adventure—of her unexpected visit to the Rest House.

"She seemed so curious to know where we were going," he continued.

"Yes," agreed Peggy. Then she added, "She lives at Mildon, you see; they are our neighbors."

"She will be able to give news of you to your people," he said with a touch of bitterness in his voice.

"Yes," said Peggy. "I am afraid—as she said—that they would not approve of my traveling about like this."

"Then they should not have turned you away penniless!" flashed out Morford with a violence that astonished and alarmed her. "It is their own fault! Oh, when I think of them I have no words

to express what I think of their conduct toward you!"

Peggy had never suspected that Morford would adopt this point of view. She even wished to defend those absent ones who were still dear to her and were perhaps justified in the exercise of their Olympian authority. She had rebelled and disobeyed, and she no more questioned their right to punish her in this way than as a child she has questioned their right to administer sharp physical chastisement to her. In their eyes her fault had been unpardonable.

"You must not blame them," she said quickly, "I am their child—they have a right to punish me if they think I deserve it."

Frederick looked at her in speechless astonishment. It was evident that she did not blame them at all for their unparalleled harshness; she even defended them from hostile criticism.

"They warned me that it was what would happen," she explained. "Just as they used to warn me that I should be punished when I was a little child if I did certain things. If I disobeyed them I had only myself to thank, but it didn't—" and now her face broke into an enchanting smile—"it didn't make the pain any easier to bear!"

She remembered afterward that throughout the journey Frederick Morford did strenuously exert himself to look after her comfort, as if perhaps he wished to make amends for the harshness of his reception of her on the previous day. He sedulously saw that she had all that she required in the way of open or shut windows, rugs, hot-water tins for her feet, newspapers to read.

He could ill afford the money he had spent on the latter, as well as on the first-class railway tickets which Peggy had unthinkingly permitted him to buy. But at least it should never be said of him that he had neglected to take care of this creature of china-like fragility beside whom he felt so aware of his own great clumsiness and awkwardness.

The two hours' journey passed all too quickly for Peggy, who was now definitely dreading the thought of seeing Frederick and Bridget Dalton together. Her pride, too, suffered a little at the prospect of being thrust in all her new homelessness and friendlessness upon the charity of these strangers.

It seemed to be her very first taste of the bitter bread of dependence, which in the future must certainly form her principal sustenance.

Mrs. Dalton greeted them with warm and frank kindness. If she felt any surprise at their advent she managed to conceal it admirably, and she did not betray much curiosity about the explanation which in his telegram Frederick had promised to offer. But he took so little notice of women as a rule that Mrs. Dalton did give Peggy one quick, searching glance to ascertain, if possible, what there could be in this girl to awaken his interest. She saw a pale, dark-haired slip of a girl who at first sight was scarcely pretty at all, and moreover, seemed to be afflicted with the most agonizing timidity or shyness—Mrs. Dalton could not quite make up her mind which. The question that did frankly puzzle her, even when the explanation had been offered, was

why Peggy should have sought out Frederick Morford when she was first flung a homeless convert upon the world? It was a courageous thing for any one to do! She was not certain that she would have embarked upon that course herself. Was it only the proverbial rushing in of the fool upon sacred or dangerous ground?

"Of course she can stay with us, Frederick," said Mrs. Dalton when she was alone with him after tea. Bridget, who had not been in when they first arrived (a fact which aroused Peggy's surprise and made her question herself as to whether she would have been capable of a similar detachment in Bridget's position) bore Peggy off to her room as soon as that meal was over.

"It'll be awfully kind of you to have her for a bit," he said; "you see she's not accustomed to looking after herself, and she might do something foolish. In some ways she is such a child! And she's not resentful—she hasn't a hard feeling in her heart toward her parents! She—she almost reproached me for blaming them."

"I'm sure that's very nice of her," said Mrs. Dalton in her pleasant, conventional way, "she certainly looks a dear little thing, Frederick. Well, we shall be delighted to keep her as long as she likes to stay. This house is big enough to hold a dozen homeless converts. Still, I can't imagine any parent hard-hearted enough to turn a little bit of a thing like that out into the world without a penny. I suppose they thought it would be the quickest way of getting her back again."

"I suppose they did," said Frederick gloomily.

"Let's hope she'll have the strength to persevere. It was a bit of a risk, wasn't it? You can't imagine what a miserable object she looked last night when she arrived at the Rest House. Wet through and splashed with mud—and cold—and crying!"

"I wonder what made her go to the Rest House?" she said, looking straight at Frederick with her clear, candid eyes. He changed color a little, feeling that the question was perhaps less simple than it sounded at first.

"Oh, well—she had an idea Mary might help her. She didn't know, you see, that my father was dead or that Mary had gone into a convent. And she said, too, that she wanted to come and make a thanksgiving in the chapel where she first received the Faith."

"Very nice of her, I'm sure," said Mrs. Dalton. "Still, it was just a little awkward for you, wasn't it? I don't suppose that idea occurred to her, though."

"I'm quite sure it didn't," said Frederick warmly, "she was only distressed because she thought her coming was *inconvenient*. I tell you she has the outlook of a child!"

"Yes—she's a wee bit thing, as my old Scotch nurse used to say," said Mrs. Dalton. But as she spoke she gave Frederick another quick glance of scrutiny, as if she wished to penetrate into the fastnesses of that young man's well-guarded heart. She had always hoped that he might take a fancy to Bridget, who was more than ready to fall in love with him and had suffered already from one or two severe heart-aches

on his account. Mrs. Dalton had hoped, too, that Mary's departure to the convent might have been helpful in turning his thoughts toward matrimony. And so far as she had been aware, Bridget was really the only girl whom Frederick knew at all intimately. It was only to be expected that in contemplating matrimony in the abstract his thoughts should turn to his friend's sister. She herself had done all that a wise mother could do to show a young man that he was welcome in spite of his lack of fortune, and would be equally welcome if he wished to establish a permanent connection between them. She had once artlessly informed him of the amount that would pass into Bridget's hands on the day of her marriage according to the terms of her father's will. But Frederick, the least vain of men, who believed himself to be inherently unattractive to all women, had perceived none of these innocent maternal manoeuvres. He was friendly to Ally's sisters and nothing more.

It never occurred to him that Mrs. Dalton had any wish for him to marry Bridget, nor that her first feeling on receiving his telegram that day had been one of vague disappointment. And Bridget had looked at the telegram and said, "Miss Metcalfe? Who *can* she be? How odd of him to bring a girl we've never seen here!" Bridget was indeed so astonished that she had forthwith gone off for a long walk, and when she came back her eyes and nose were a little reddened—by the wind.

CHAPTER XXV

LADY METCALFE's complacency received an indubitable shock when she received Beatrice's letter telling her that Peggy had been received into the Catholic Church, and therefore she and her husband had deemed it better that she should not return to their house.

"We feel that we should have been going against you and father by continuing to receive her," wrote Lady Charsley.

That Peggy should have left Portman Square for an unknown destination did disturb very powerfully Lady Metcalfe's maternal tranquillity. She had counted upon Beatrice keeping her for the first few days if the worst came to the worst and Peggy defied them all.

"Charsley packed her off the moment she returned," was the next sentence of this agitating letter; "he was very angry with her. I am sure when she finds herself quite penniless and alone and with nowhere to go to, she will come flying back to Mildon, and beg your forgiveness, and give up these dreadful *errors*."

But although she wrote with such apparent conviction in the righteousness of her own action, Beatrice was not without a dreadful misgiving (which she attributed to nerves) that Peggy might meet with some untoward fate before the salutary process of bringing her to her senses should be perfectly completed. London was not

the safest place for a girl who had always been sheltered from the slightest knowledge of evil. It was all very well to be firm and put down one's foot and uphold stern parental authority, but how about Peggy alone in that vast wilderness of streets? Beatrice was too maternal a woman herself not to picture Ethne grown up and situated in some such deplorable position, and it was this that made her ease her own conscience by writing that letter to her mother with the desire to justify her own action.

The letter, unfortunately, had not at all the effect upon Lady Metcalfe which Beatrice had hoped and expected. Her mother had indeed confidently pictured Peggy being gradually brought to her senses and to a proper knowledge of her own wrong-doing under the safe and comfortable roof of Beatrice's domain. She was not quite without hope that even if Peggy did not repent and recant, Sir John might eventually be persuaded to permit her to return home. At present he was very angry and there was no use in trying to propitiate him. On the top of this came Peggy's own letter dated from the convent announcing the fact of her reception. She was staying there, she said, until she heard from them if she might return to Mildon. Sir John would not let his wife reply to the letter; he himself sent the angry telegram which had upset poor Peggy so in her new solitude. Peter was miserable and after one violent outburst in which he took Peggy's part, quite fearlessly blaming his parents for their abandonment of her, he had hardly been on speaking terms with his father.

Meals passed in gloomy silence and everything was terribly upsetting. Lady Metcalfe felt she could have borne it all if she had only been able to picture Peggy safely in Portman Square. A convent to Lady Metcalfe represented a place of almost sinister mystery. No doubt they would do their best to make a nun of Peggy. When this idea occurred to her she actually wept.

On the following Thursday she went to town, but when she arrived at the convent, determined to stifle her pride and entreat her daughter to renounce her religion and return home with her, she found to her dismay that Peggy had already left it. No—she had given no address, for she had left most of her things there and intended to return in a few days. They understood that she had gone to stay with friends in the country. Lady Metcalfe was frankly puzzled. Peggy had no intimate friends, and certainly none to whom she could appeal in a crisis of the kind. She had never paid many visits, except to her married sisters, and Lady Metcalfe could not possibly imagine whose hospitality she could have sought in this way. It is one thing to turn your daughter out of the house, or rather to forbid her to return there, in order to punish her for disobedience, but to be absolutely ignorant of her present whereabouts puts a very different complexion upon the matter when viewed in the light of anxious maternal solicitude.

It is true that Lady Metcalfe had loved Peggy in a lesser degree than her other children, and that she had been more ready when Peggy was little to reprove and punish her, but that she did love

her was not to be doubted, and at that moment of her leaving the convent, having unsuccessfully tried to discover her whereabouts, she felt that she would have given anything in the world to know that Peggy was safe and sound and not more unhappy than she deserved to be after such reprehensible behavior. It is certain that had she met Peggy then in the street she would have flung her arms about her in an excess of relief and affection.

Instead of going to see Beatrice as she had planned, Lady Metcalfe dismissed the taxi in which she had driven to the convent and walked to the nearest Tube-station, where she took a ticket for the Bank. It was the first time she had ever traveled by this modern subterranean and altogether terrifying means, but she felt it would be the quickest way of arriving at Sir John's office. She even managed the change at Holborn with quite a little thrill of excitement at her own independence.

Sir John's office was in Fenchurch Street, and as Lady Metcalfe did not wish to be seen walking in the City alone, she took another taxi from the Bank. In all the long years of her married life she had never penetrated unexpectedly to that city sanctum, for Sir John was old-fashioned and preferred to keep his business life and his home life strictly apart. That had been his father's way and he had adopted it, and when the time came, he intended to recommend it to Peter.

Lady Metcalfe was not even known by sight to some of the clerks, whose business seemed to consist solely in protecting the person of Sir John

from fortuitous molestation, so firm were they in their courteous endeavors to restrain her from reaching his own private domain. But she brushed them all aside and opened his door without knocking.

On seeing his grim face regarding her with surprise and annoyance, Lady Metcalfe burst into a torrent of tears.

"Peggy!" she sobbed, "Peggy!"

Sir John's mouth hardened till it looked like a neat slit across the lower part of his face. But as he could not help seeing that something had upset his wife very much indeed, he pulled a chair forward, held her arm as she sat down, and said, "Do try to control yourself, my dear Jane."

Control—there was nothing to equal that quality in all the world. Its possession gave you an immense advantage over those persons who habitually gave way to emotions, anger, and passion of any kind.

But the words did not have the effect upon his wife which he had hoped. Instead of displaying any disposition to control herself, her sobs became more unrestrained than ever, and between the sobs came broken words and sentences that revealed the unhappy cause of her agitation.

"Peggy's lost—we don't know where she is—she's left the convent. And I can't bear it! You must find her and bring her back or I shall *die*, John. I feel as if I couldn't bear it one single moment longer! Of course you've every right to be angry with her, but you can't turn a young girl like that out into the world, without a home and without a penny. I've been thinking of all

the dreadful stories I've ever heard of girls disappearing in London and never being heard of again. If she were to die—if anything were to happen to her—you would be blamed, and you would feel like a *murderer*!"

Sir John closed the door which led into the room where Peter worked; he did not wish his son to hear these maternal outpourings. He said stiffly:

"No man likes to turn his daughter out of the house. But Peggy has deliberately disobeyed and defied us. I warned her that it would happen. I have only carried out my word. And until she can show sorrow and signs of amendment, she shall not return to Mildon. I hope I made it clear in my telegram yesterday that there was only one condition on which I was prepared to receive her back."

"But she won't show sorrow—and I'm sure she'll never give up her religion—you know how obstinate she is," wailed Lady Metcalfe.

"Then she shall not return," said Sir John. "My dear Jane, I am really much too busy to discuss this matter with you just now. You must wait till I come home to-night."

"I can't be put off like this, John," wailed Lady Metcalfe, "you can have nothing to think about that can possibly be more important than my darling Peggy. I must know where she is. If she can't come home I *must* know where she is! She must have money—a home—a companion to look after her—she's too young to be alone—it isn't safe for Peggy—she's always been such a child for her years." Her tears flowed afresh.

"Oh, what's the use of my talking like this? I must find Peggy before I can do anything for her. You must advertise for her and put her photograph in the 'Daily Mirror'!"

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind," said Sir John, "it would be absurd to forbid your daughter to return home because she chose to disobey and defy you, and then advertise for her whereabouts. Discipline must be maintained—I daresay later on she will be very grateful to us for taking this firm stand. Peggy will come home fast enough when she has found out what it is like to be cold and hungry!"

"But I don't *want* her to be cold and hungry," sobbed Lady Metcalfe, "she isn't strong like Diana and Beatrice, and quite little things upset her and make her ill. She will get ill now and then it will turn to consumption and she will die."

"Jane, you are giving way. You must believe that I know best how to deal with Peggy. I beg that you will not do anything so foolish as to interfere."

At that moment the door was flung open and Peter suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"I've heard what you have been saying," he said, eyeing his father with a cold hostility, "and I have come to tell you that you need not worry about Peggy—I know where she has gone to. I've had a letter from her and she's gone to friends who will be kind to her. She knew, you see," and now his voice was slightly raised and his dark eyes blazed with passion, "that even if you didn't care what became of her, *I* should be wretched and anxious if I didn't know. I'm not

going to give my sister up just because she's become a Catholic. I know Peggy is in earnest about it, and it's made her miserable to go against you and be the cause of this awful family row." He spoke hurriedly and passionately, as if the very act of speaking increased his anger. He had lost all control of himself and faced both his astonished parents in a defiant attitude. "But she had to obey her own conscience. She isn't like Diana and Beatrice—and *myself*!" He uttered this word with a fierce scorn. "We have all in turn yielded and done things we didn't want to because we couldn't bring ourselves to sacrifice the flesh-pots. Peggy is the only one of us who is worth her salt and can do what she knows to be right regardless of the consequences!"

"Hush, Peter, hush," sobbed Lady Metcalfe, "you mustn't talk like this. It's very undutiful—we've done the best we possibly could for you all. You mustn't say such wicked things about your sisters. Diana and Beatrice are both perfectly happy—they have both married men they can love and respect and have happy homes and darling children. I only wish Peggy were as happily provided for."

"Oh, I don't deny they're contented now," said Peter, recklessly, "but it was simply a frightful risk to marry poor Beatrice to Charsley when she was in love with Claude. It's turned out all right as it happened, but supposing Beatrice hadn't found that the flesh-pots compensated for what she'd given up and had gone off with Claude afterward, you would have been to blame for the scandal!"

"Oh, how dare you speak so wickedly of your own sister? That was only a silly boy-and-girl affair between her and Claude—he had not a penny, and he was too young to think about marriage. No one saw the unsuitability of it more clearly than Beatrice—as soon as it was put to her. And she is perfectly happy with Charsley. We parents *do* know what is best for our children."

"All the same it was a risk," said Peter grimly, "and when you tried to force Peggy into marrying Quentin you made certain she would submit as tamely as Beatrice did."

"Oh, hush, Peter—don't, don't," sobbed Lady Metcalfe.

"You appear to have taken leave of your senses, Peter," said Sir John in a cold, unmoved tone that had in it a note of actual boredom. "Kindly go back to your room and use your undoubted ability to get through the work I gave you this afternoon. If I dismiss you," he continued, his hard eyes fixed upon his son, "you will be able to join your sister and starve in her company—it is what you both deserve. And if you speak in this way again you will most assuredly be dismissed, just as I should sack any of my clerks for insolence and insubordination."

Peter, white as a sheet now that his anger had subsided, went back to his own room and slammed the door.

"I hope you are satisfied now, Jane," said Sir John, addressing his wife, "you know your precious Peggy is safe and probably enjoying herself thoroughly now she is no longer trammelled by the discipline of home. I am very busy just now

and have extremely important letters to attend to. Shall I ask Wilson to get a taxi for you?"

"Yes, please, John," said Lady Metcalfe. She was once more the submissive wife. And it was such an enormous relief to think that Peggy was quite safe, even if they did not know who those mysterious friends of hers might be. And although Peter was treating the whole affair in a very wrong and subversive spirit, he had taken a great load off her mind by saying that he knew where his sister was. She kissed her husband and went downstairs.

"I shall give Peter some money and tell him to send it to Peggy," she thought to herself as she drove away. Dusk had begun to fall, and the lamps along the Embankment were showing their pale globes of light. The sky was clear and a little breeze was blowing across the river. It was one of those late autumn evenings when London looks perhaps more beautiful than at any other time, full of mystery, of suggested but not defined detail, and with lights and shadows curiously mingling. Those brown blurred effects are often more exquisite even than the blue and white of its summer mornings. There was something calm and soothing in this vision of twilit London, and it helped to restore the shaken complacency of Lady Metcalfe.

"Peter mustn't really talk like that," she reflected; "if any one were to hear him it would give them such a bad impression of us all. We have always done our very best for our children, and if we have erred at all it has been on the side of doing too much for them. They have always had

everything they could possibly want—everything that money could buy. The best education at the most expensive schools—the best medical advice—the most expensive doctors and dentists and oculists. And I am sure no other girls had half the frocks that mine had.” A rapid mental survey of all these substantial benefits convinced Lady Metcalfe that nothing had been left undone in their anxious desire that their children should derive every possible advantage from the increasing prosperity of Metcalfe & Co. Sir John was always liberal in his allowances for all these purposes. Nothing had ever been denied to them except for their good, and then only when it was absolutely necessary!

It was so wrong—such a wilful misjudgment—on the part of Peter to declare that Beatrice had been forced into marrying Charsley. Such an ideally happy union. Parents were responsible for their daughters’ marriages; they knew best what was conducive to true happiness.

Two days later she received a visit from Mrs. Gillespie, who drove over from Mildon Place early one afternoon.

“Oh, my dear Lady Metcalfe,” she cried impetuously when her hostess entered the drawing-room, “you must not think me dreadfully interfering, but I could not help hearing that you were very angry with Peggy.”

At the mention of her daughter, Lady Metcalfe’s face changed a little; something of its rosi-ness seemed to vanish.

“You haven’t come to tell me that anything

has happened to Peggy, Mrs. Gillespie?" she said.

She was anxious and quick to take alarm; she had such visions of little Peggy astray and homeless, in spite of all that Peter had said to reassure her.

"Oh, she is quite well, if it comes to that! I have seen her," said Mrs. Gillespie. "I met her down at a place called Coldford in Somersetshire yesterday. I was waiting for the London train and she was going to Freshly in Gloucestershire."

"Freshly? Why, that is Beatrice's station when she is at Lavender," exclaimed Lady Metcalfe in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, I imagined at once that she was going to Lavender. But it appears that Lady Charsley refused to have her there and Peggy was going to the Daltons at Bargrove. She was not alone—she had a man with her, and I can tell you she was very much embarrassed at the sight of me."

"A man?" repeated Lady Metcalfe. "Who could it possibly have been? It was not Hugh Quentin?"

"No, it was certainly not Hugh," replied Mrs. Gillespie; "it was some one very different from Hugh. A black-haired, black-browed, forbidding looking man—she introduced him to me—his name was Morford."

"*Morford!*" cried Lady Metcalfe, sinking back in her chair and looking almost faint with emotion. "You do not mean to tell me that Peggy went off to that dreadful Rest House!"

"I really know nothing of her doings. But it looked uncommonly like it."

"But Peggy assured us that he never tried to proselytize—to convert her. We were always afraid he had acquired an influence over her. Beatrice told me he was such a terrible *back-woods* young man!" She could hardly repress her tears at this fresh and disastrous development.

"But if you won't receive your daughter at home, and if her sisters won't receive her, it stands to reason that she must go somewhere. I daresay this man was doing the best thing he could by taking her to Mrs. Dalton's. They are Catholics—I know the name quite well."

"But she must have gone to the Morfords first," moaned Lady Metcalfe. Oh, there was no doubt that Peggy, released from all parental trammels, had sought out this man in a way that must certainly have looked suspiciously like a throwing of herself at his head. And he had not been slow to shift the burden of her to other shoulders. It was dreadful to think that Peggy should be living on charity. It was an appalling position for a Metcalfe, and one that struck an overwhelming blow at the family pride. There was no doubt that Peggy intended to marry this man—it was what they had always suspected. And if the young man himself approved of the scheme, the marriage might even take place before there was time for any of them to step in and prevent it!

"I felt it wasn't right for Peggy to be traveling about alone like that," said Mrs. Gillespie; "she is such a baby. I am sure that you and Sir John have every reason to be angry with her, but at the same time I want to entreat you to have her home

again. I've thought it over, Lady Metcalfe, and I determined to come and intercede for her—that chance meeting seemed to give me the right. I've pictured Blossom at Peggy's age and I know however disobedient and rebellious she might be, I could never let her go out of my keeping—alone like that—just when a girl wants her mother most!”

Her little deep, hollow voice almost croaked with emotion.

“Peter said she was with friends. He had a letter from her, and he seemed quite satisfied. But I never dreamed that the friends could be the Morfords!”

Peggy would certainly set the seal upon her disgrace by marrying this man, and then she would be lost to them forever.

“My husband would never let me have her back,” she said. “He is very angry with her. Oh, I know you are blaming us, Mrs. Gillespie, but Peggy has been very naughty and rebellious, going off and becoming a Catholic like this, though we warned her what would happen if she did!”

“I simply longed to carry her off and bring her back with me yesterday,” said Mrs. Gillespie, “but I don't suppose for a moment she would have come.”

Having said her say, she rose to go.

As she said good-by she looked earnestly into Lady Metcalfe's agitated face and said:

“You're going the right way, you know, to make her fly into an unsuitable, imprudent mar-

riage. If you really know anything against this Morford man you should go and fetch her home at once!"

"Oh, you don't know Sir John—he is very obdurate," sobbed Lady Metcalfe. "He will never let her come!"

CHAPTER XXVI

PEGGY had not been at Bargrove many days before Mrs. Dalton definitely offered to give her a home with them as long as she chose to remain.

Frederick had returned to the Rest House early on the day after their arrival. Nothing at all was said about his engagement to Bridget, and there was no outward evidence of any extraordinary or intimate interest in each other displayed by either of the persons concerned. But Peggy had no reason to doubt Beatrice's word, and she could not help perceiving the extreme suitability of such a marriage. Frederick was nothing to her—a man who had crossed her path by chance and left upon her life a mark as if some storm had passed heedlessly across it, a mark of which he was himself utterly unaware. It was more than likely that he should choose for his wife the sister of his great friend. Bridget was a very charming girl, tall, fair-haired, with blue eyes and a skin of cream and roses—the very antithesis of Peggy herself. She was kind to Peggy in a sweet, rather undemonstrative fashion, and resolutely stifled any unworthy or jealous thoughts in her regard. For the sight of Morford arriving at Bargrove with Peggy was a sharp experience for Bridget—one that she felt she would never quite forget. It had shown her just where she stood, and what the ultimate loss of him might mean. It would be always difficult for her to

show him in the future that frank, sisterly affection which she had always displayed toward him ever since he first came, a shabby, ill-clad school-boy, to spend his holidays with Ally

Bridget suspected Peggy of being in love with Morford. Else why should she have rushed off to the Rest House, to these people she knew so slightly, seeking, as it were, sanctuary with them the moment she found herself homeless? Bridget was three or four years older than Peggy and she knew it had not been a very wise nor a very conventional thing to do. It had placed Peggy in a false position from which only Frederick's great tact and delicacy had been able to extricate her. A man could not think any better of a girl who was capable of acting with such impulsive and imprudent rashness.

Whether his interest in her was very profound Bridget could not say. He had deposited her at Bargrove and left again on the following morning. Bridget wondered if he would write to her. To be sure, he had not been at all tender or friendly in his manner to Peggy; he had been brusque and rather domineering, and the girl seemed timid and a little afraid of him, though eager to do everything he suggested in an almost childishly obedient way. There was one comforting thought, however—Frederick could not possibly marry a woman without a penny. And her own fortune of five hundred a year would be quite enough with what Frederick earned to enable them to live comfortably if simply at the Rest House. Yet in spite of these consoling thoughts Bridget still wondered if he were as

insensible to the charm of Peggy as he appeared to be. It was a very real charm, underlying all that soft, hesitating timidity of hers.

Bridget would scarcely have been human had she not heard with delight that Peggy had declined the home so generously offered by Mrs. Dalton; she would only accept her hospitality until she had found that mysterious "something" which was to render her independent of all charity. She was very grateful, was obviously touched by Mrs. Dalton's kindness, but there was an inherent pride in Peggy which came to the fore now and prevented her from accepting a permanent home at Bargrove. Father Fitzgerald or the Reverend Mother at the convent would certainly soon hear of something suitable for her in the way of a post—perhaps as a companion, or a governess to quite small children. Diana, it is true, had said that no one would engage her as a governess, but Monica West had been encouraging about the possibilities of her finding a situation as companion.

Soon after Frederick's departure from Bargrove Peggy received a letter full of apology from Monica. She was very, very sorry, she said, but she had utterly forgotten to post the letter Peggy had entrusted to her. She had just discovered it in the pocket of a coat she had not worn for some days. She hoped it had not caused Peggy a great deal of inconvenience. She ended the letter by saying, "I miss you very much—there's no one else of my own age here. I hope you will soon come back."

It was so simple an explanation she wondered

she had never thought of it before. Next time she saw Frederick Morford she would tell him what had happened. Next time? She did not know when, if ever, they should meet again. She had been over a fortnight with the Daltons before any more news was heard of him, and then he only wrote a line to Mrs. Dalton, saying he was very busy, and he hoped that all, including Miss Metcalfe, were well.

At last came the desired letter from the Reverend Mother saying that an elderly lady whom she knew very well was looking for a young companion to travel abroad with her, and she had recommended Peggy for the post. If she knew French and a little Italian, so much the better, as her friend was to spend the winter in Florence after two or three weeks at Cannes. There would be no salary, but all expenses would be paid, and Mrs. Ralston was extremely kind and would treat her as a daughter. But she was also delicate and nervous and Peggy would have to read to her and amuse her. It sounded an ideal prospect to Peggy, who ran, overjoyed, to display the letter to Mrs. Dalton.

The thought of Peggy going out as a dependent even under such favorable circumstances as these filled Mrs. Dalton with a very real concern and misgiving. She was singularly unformed, and Mrs. Dalton had the feeling that she would very easily be hurt. But there seemed to be no alternative. The girl was too proud to accept her hospitality for any length of time, and it seemed unlikely that her father would relent and forgive her. Peggy must therefore earn her

bread as thousands of homeless converts had done before her. Surely she could pay the price as well as they!

She put down the letter and looked at Peggy.

"I think if you are determined to leave us that you had better accept it," she said. "I have met Mrs. Ralston, and she is a very charming woman and a most pious, good Catholic—it would be an advantage for any young convert to be with her. But, on the other hand, she is very delicate and she might make too great demands upon your physical strength. You do not look very strong, and when you are with her you will not be able to call your time your own."

"I am prepared for that," said Peggy. The prospect of going to Italy was rather exciting; it made up for a good deal.

"Perhaps you would rather consult Frederick Morford before you decide," said Mrs. Dalton. "I will write and ask him to come here, if you like."

"Oh, no, please not," cried Peggy, distressed at the idea. "I mean—he is far too busy to make a journey just on my account. I was ashamed of giving him all that trouble—of taking up so much of his time—when he brought me here. I would not trouble him again for the world!" A quick flush colored her pale face as she spoke.

"Perhaps you will write and tell him, then, what you intend to do. I really think perhaps you owe him this courtesy," said Mrs. Dalton. "He has been very kind to you, Peggy."

"Very well. If you wish it I will write," said Peggy, though her heart shrank from the task.

She had several letters to write. First to the Reverend Mother, saying she would be delighted to accept the post; then one to Peter, whom she passionately hoped to see before she left England. She had received sympathetic notes from Peter, and she knew that he was unalterably on her side, although she was afraid that in his heart of hearts he considered her a goose. But there was a change, too, in their mutual attitude; she did not find it quite so easy to confide in Peter now as she used to. She mentioned Morford's name as little as possible, and the details of her forlorn arrival at the Rest House were still unknown to him.

Frederick's turn came at last, and Peggy felt sure that she should not find it an easy matter to write to him. She wished to be cold and polite and the result seemed almost rude in its stiffness. And after all, as Mrs. Dalton had pointed out, he had been very kind. When the letter was finished it ran as follows:

"Dear Mr. Morford:

"Mrs. Dalton thinks you would perhaps like to know my plans. I have been offered a post as companion to a Mrs. Ralston, who is going abroad for the winter, to Cannes and then to Florence. I have made up my mind to accept it if she thinks me suitable. I am returning to the convent on Tuesday.

"Yours sincerely,

"MARGARET METCALFE."

Morford did not answer the letter, although

Peggy hoped that he might. Aware that the thought of him occupied her thoughts with a greater frequency and persistence since her second visit to the Rest House, and that he was capable of stirring within her heart a sense of emotion and pain that she could not define, Peggy longed for the day to come when she should leave England and put the sea between herself and this man, who seemed actually in some obscure, fantastic manner to dominate her life. In another country, amid fresh and unaccustomed surroundings, she would perhaps be able to thrust the remembrance of him from her. She would destroy this childish dream. He had been sent into her life, so she still firmly believed, in order that he might help her to become a Catholic; the very strength of him had in a sense supported her. But now he had fulfilled the task allotted to him. The bridge across which she had passed to reach the desired stronghold had served its purpose. He had given her her very first lessons in the Faith—impatiently, grudgingly, it is true—and she tried to believe that all she felt for him now was the outcome of her fervent gratitude for the instruction thus offered and the help thus given. But she must not think of him any more, and in this first practical impulse toward detachment Peggy felt a sharp pain that clouded her horizon.

On Monday she rose early and went to Mass as usual and after breakfast she set to work to pack her few possessions. She was to start early on the following day, and she wished to have the afternoon free in case Mrs. Dalton proposed to

take her anywhere. But the small activity of packing, instead of distracting her, served to depress her. It was true she was only to return to the convent on the following day, but in a very few days more she would set forth on that first stage of her new life, among strangers. The prospect alarmed her a little now that it was coming so close.

When she came down to luncheon Mrs. Dalton said:

"I have had a letter from Frederick Morford—he is coming here for the night. I'm sorry Ally will miss him again."

She spoke carelessly, as if Frederick's coming concerned no one in particular. Peggy had often wished that Bridget would confide in her about her engagement to Morford. But perhaps it was only one of those understandings that had not yet been ratified by a formal betrothal, as sometimes happens when the marriage can not take place very soon.

Now Peggy and Bridget glanced nervously at each other, and both faces betrayed a heightened color. The thought that involuntarily presented itself to Bridget's mind was this: "If he had only waited until next week, when she wouldn't have been here!" There was a lurking fear in her heart that his coming did closely concern Peggy, and that he was determined to see her again before she left England.

Peggy, on her side, could only hope that he was not coming to try to dissuade her from going out as a companion. She was utterly innocent of any thought that he might have yet another ob-

ject and one that most intimately concerned herself, in coming to Bargrove to-day.

"It is very unlike Frederick to pay us two visits so close together," continued Mrs. Dalton, "and he gives no reason at all for coming to-day. However, he knows he is very welcome whenever he likes to come."

Peggy stole up to her room after luncheon. She felt that she did not wish to be downstairs when Frederick arrived. It was rather hard on her that he should choose to-day—her last day at Bargrove—to come, especially when she had just made so many firm resolutions to forget him or at least to think of him less often. It would only make things a little more difficult for her. She had so hoped to go away without seeing him again.

"Does this mean he's in love with her?" said Bridget to her mother when Peggy had slipped away upstairs.

"I can't tell. Frederick is so strange and reticent," said Mrs. Dalton. "It must be on her account that he's coming, though."

"She wrote to him—she may have suggested it," said Bridget, feeling hurt and jealous.

"I don't think that for a moment. I asked her if she would like him to come and she seemed quite distressed at the very idea. And if she had cared at all for him she could hardly have been in such a hurry to leave us."

With this Bridget had to be satisfied until Frederick should arrive and divulge his motive. Events would disclose what was in his mind, supposing there existed any definite policy or inten-

tion therein. Bridget was not without courage and she braced herself for the blow that her heart feared might be about to descend upon her. Oh, why had this foolish, helpless elfin creature slipped so unnecessarily into Frederick's life?

When Peggy went downstairs to the drawing-room Frederick was already there and they were having tea. She sat down near the fire, her face in shadow, and it seemed to her as well as to the Daltons that Frederick took but scant notice of her. He scarcely bestowed a glance upon that little figure sitting there silently in the corner. But Peggy felt more than ever that when he was present he did appear to take possession of all her thoughts, dominating them with the very strength of his personality; it made her feel young and timid—and absurd! She was a child to be taught and scolded and ordered about in that impatient, half-scornful way.

It is not always easy for two guests to obtain a long and private interview in another person's house. Short of giving Mrs. Dalton the key to the whole situation, which Frederick felt a little shy about doing, it was impossible for him to see Peggy alone. After tea they would probably all continue to sit there and talk until it was time to dress for dinner. And after dinner there would be more conversation and perhaps a rubber of bridge till bed-time. And in the morning Peggy was to leave for town by an early train; she would have to start soon after eight o'clock.

Of course, he could go off to the smoking-room whenever he wished, he reflected gloomily. But even so it would be impossible to ask Peggy to

come with him. Now that at last he had made up his mind to speak to her he was perhaps going to be denied the opportunity.

Yet how absurd of him ever to imagine that she could learn to care for him! Just now, when she had given him her hand for that brief second the conventions demanded, it had lain cold and still in his. Her face when she greeted him had betrayed no pleasure, only perhaps a timid anxiety. Fool—fool—that he had been to come!

But Bridget unwittingly gave him the opportunity he was seeking.

"There is Benediction at the convent this evening, Peggy. I think you said you would like to go. I'm afraid I can't come with you, but you know the way," she remarked after tea.

"Yes—I should like to go," said Peggy. "I will go and put on my things."

It was a relief to escape from the room. The sight of Frederick had filled her with that strange and trembling excitement his presence never failed to evoke in her. He made her feel wonderfully alive, but unhappy and restless, too, and even a little afraid. It would be a relief to go to the convent and pray.

She moved away, her eyes on the ground, her hands hanging limply. Frederick's large black eyes were fastened upon her retreating figure. To permit her to go forth into a cruel and hostile world to earn her own bread seemed to him a thing that was almost criminal. She had hardly closed the door when he burst forth:

"You can not be serious in saying that child is going to earn her own living! Why, she is

hardly better than a baby—and she must be nearly as useless and ignorant.”

“She will learn,” said Mrs. Dalton calmly, “and I do not agree with you that she is so very young. She is quite determined to go, and there is an obstinacy about her which one can’t touch. You must see that for yourself, for how else would she have persisted in becoming a Catholic in the face of so much cruel opposition? There is something very sterling about Peggy Metcalfe. I am sure she doesn’t care at all for all the money she has had to give up. She has got what she wanted, and she seems perfectly satisfied, except for the very natural pain at having to renounce her own people.”

“And what can they be made of to turn a baby like that adrift?” demanded Frederick fiercely.

Bridget looked at him with surprise; she had never seen him so deeply roused before. His eyes were blazing.

“Oh, they know where she is now,” returned Mrs. Dalton, in her pleasant, matter-of-fact way; “they know she is safe. They seem to hope she’ll get tired of it and give up her religion and go back to be forgiven. Lady Metcalfe has even sent her a little money through the elder son.”

Frederick rose and paced up and down the room in a restless, agitated manner. Suddenly he said:

“You must forgive me, Mrs. Dalton, but I really must make one more effort to induce her to give up this mad scheme. I will walk to the convent with her—we can discuss it on the way!”

Bridget’s heart sank as he announced this in-

tention. Whatever he meant to say to her, it was quite evident that his thoughts were full of Peggy, and if they gave evidence of anger and irritability and impatience, there seemed to lie behind them also an almost fierce solicitude for her welfare.

When Peggy, dressed in her outdoor things, came down the stairs into the hall, she saw Frederick's great figure standing there as if awaiting her.

"Are you ready?" he said. "I am coming with you. It is much too dark for you to go alone and it was very thoughtless of Bridget to suggest it. She forgets that you are not used to tearing over the country at all hours as she is!"

"I don't mind going alone," said Peggy quietly; "I should like to be as brave and independent as Bridget."

Morford opened the door. The night was fine and above the tall elms a young sickle moon, a mere thread of silver, was visible, cutting the sky like a white gash. A cold and buoyant breeze touched their faces. Morford strode forward a few paces ahead of Peggy as if he were leading the way. He turned across the garden and through a little gate that led down a private path to the convent. Here high trees formed an archway above their heads, producing a deep obscurity.

"I never come this way by myself," said Peggy, "it is so dark. I keep to the road, though it is so much longer."

Morford did not reply, and Peggy thought he

must have come out against his inclination on purpose to accompany her and protect her from possible danger. Throughout the walk to the chapel he did not say a single word, but took advantage of the narrowness of the path to walk on ahead of her.

It was impossible for Peggy ever to hear Benediction without feelings of the most profound emotion. To that service, eternally beautiful and consoling, many persons have owed their conversion. Peggy was aware that she owed hers to that first Benediction in the little chapel at the Rest House, where for the first time she had knelt unknowing in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

To-night she forgot Frederick, who was kneeling only a few paces from her, his dark head bowed upon his hands, his lips moving in inaudible prayer. The thought of to-morrow, which promised to be the starting-point, the threshold of a new and strange life during which it was quite possible that her perseverance and fidelity might even be put to most fiery proof, filled her to-night with no kind of fear. This much she knew with a deep gratefulness, that she would always have these unchangeable spiritual things to help her; in all her journeying she would never be far from this most Holy Presence. And although there was something cold and forlorn in the prospect of going away to be among strangers, it did not to-night give her too much cause for apprehension. She was not strong—as Morford had once scornfully told her

—she was not the stuff of which martyrs are made. Only she had the faith, and she wanted passionately to be worthy of this great grace.

The lights on the altar had all been extinguished before she rose from her knees with a little start and a feeling of compunction that perhaps she had kept Morford waiting. She felt happier; those prayers had strengthened her; she felt more hopeful, less nervous. As she rose and moved toward the door the light fell full upon her face. She reminded Morford of some picture he had seen years ago—a St. Agnes, perhaps, at any rate one of the girl-martyrs—with just such an uplifted, tranquil expression. He stood aside, allowing her to pass, watching her with a curiously intent expression in his eyes. He seemed to discern something in Peggy's face then that had never been there before—a strength and purpose of which he had hardly deemed her capable. Across his mind words traveled rapidly, he almost repeated them aloud: "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*"

He followed Peggy in silence out of the gate and into the lane beyond.

"Shall we go back by the road?" he said to her.

"Very well," she answered.

They went forward in silence. The road that dips to Bargrove is broad and has grassy spaces on both sides of it, and then a low stone wall loosely built to divide it from the fields beyond. And the fields are not flat—they slope and spread right up to the top of the wolds. In the pale moonlight could be discerned the dark and en-

circling shape of the hills, cut at intervals by the black rim of the walls that separated field from field.

There had been days since their last meeting when Frederick had thought it might be perhaps an easy thing to speak to this girl whose change of circumstances had placed her within his reach. But now in her presence it seemed no longer easy. He felt certain that she had never regarded him with anything but a friendly indifference, tempered with a little fear of his strength and roughness. Their mutual positions had been almost those of teacher and pupil. And now if she refused to listen—if she would not hear him—she would have to go forth alone to earn her bread. No one in the world could be less suited for that task than she.

He slackened his steps; at this rate they would be back at the house before he had uttered a word.

“What has put it into your head to leave the Daltons like this?” he said at last. “I am sure they have done everything they possibly can to make you feel happy and at home.”

“Oh, indeed they have,” said Peggy eagerly, “but I think it is my duty to try to work for my own living. And the sooner I begin the better. I am so stupid that I am sure I shall not find it at all easy.”

There was something so naïve in this admission that it won an unwilling smile from Frederick. He stopped and looked at Peggy. Their two figures made black blots in the broad, moonlit road. There was not a great deal of light, but he felt

certain as he looked at her that he could see tears glistening on those thick black lashes.

"But I think," she went on in that slow, tranquil way of hers, "that my being a Catholic will make lots of things much easier—even hard, difficult, disagreeable things."

"Of course it will," agreed Frederick. He scarcely knew what he was saying, so great was his longing then to take Peggy in his arms and hold her to his heart, and shut out from her forever all that was hard and difficult and disagreeable. His control was breaking down. She was still the child of rich parents, delicately nurtured, brought up to every imaginable luxury, and he could not but believe that some day she would be restored to their favor. But here, to-night, she was only the girl who had coolly faced such immense temporal losses for the Faith, a girl strong in spite of her weakness, and steadfast in the front of cruel opposition. The thought that he had ever misjudged her smote him now like a self-inflicted blow.

"Miss Metcalfe—my dear Peggy—" he stammered, and now he found he had no words with which to speak the thoughts that thronged to his mind as he stood there gazing into her pale and astonished face. "My dear, *dear* Peggy," he repeated, and his voice was so softened that it sounded in her ears like some unbelievable music, thrilling and bewildering her.

She felt that she must be dreaming. It was impossible for Frederick to have spoken thus to her—she must have made a mistake. Yet that "My dear, *dear* Peggy" echoed and echoed across

the silence. And then surely these were no dream hands, but things of warm flesh and blood, that were clasping hers as if they would never let them go. She made no attempt to free herself, to shorten that moment that held so much and such thrilling happiness. And across the confusion and bewilderment of her own thoughts these words came caressingly:

“My darling—I can’t let you go! I love you too much. Oh, don’t tell me that my love is nothing at all to you! I want you to come back to the Rest House with me—I want you to be my wife. Oh, I shall never forget that night, not three weeks ago, when you came back—all cold and wet and frightened. I wanted to tell you then all that your coming meant to me—how I had dreamed of it through those months and months of silence when no word of you ever reached my ears.” Still holding her hands in that passionate grasp, he drew her to him; her head was against his heart, he could feel her shiver and sob. “Speak to me, Peggy! Tell me that you love me—that you will be my wife.” Harsh and imperious as ever, his voice was informed with a fear, a passionate suspense to which she could not remain indifferent.

Strange to say that Peggy, listening in an enchanted silence to Frederick’s words, was rapidly losing all fear of him. She felt, indeed, a new sense of security, more complete and permanent than she had ever experienced even in her past sheltered life. To marry Morford and to be with him forever and ever seemed in her eyes now the only perfect earthly security. And dimly

she guessed that this man was offering her a happiness which Diana and Beatrice had never dreamed of. It was from joy and not from fear that she trembled now and clung to Frederick for support.

"Oh," she said at last, "I never thought you even liked me. I felt so silly and nervous and *young* when you were there. It never entered my head that you could possibly want to marry me. Besides, Beatrice told me—that you were engaged to Bridget."

"To *Bridget*?" he echoed in astonishment, and with a most comfortingly unlover-like emphasis upon the name. "Why, I have known Bridget since I was at school. We are more like brother and sister than anything else. Surely you didn't believe that silly gossip, Peggy?"

"I didn't see why it should not be true," admitted Peggy.

"Well, you know now that there isn't a single word of truth in it," said Frederick, "so will you please give your attention to the matter in hand? Will you give me a straightforward answer? Will you marry me, Peggy? I'm poor, and I've very little to offer you except my love, which is all yours and has been yours, I believe now, since the day I first saw you."

Now there could be no mistake about those tears that hung on the black lashes, glistening almost frostily in the moonlight. When she spoke, the words were almost inaudible; he had to bend his head to catch them.

"Yes—I love you. I didn't know it till now, but I think I must have loved you all the time,

because when I thought of you I knew I could never marry Hugh—not even to please them all.”

“And you will be my wife? And you will give up this mad scheme of earning your own living? You will stay here or at the convent in London until we can be married?”

“Yes,” said Peggy very seriously, “I will do whatever you wish, Frederick—whatever you think best for me.”

There was no one in sight. They might have been alone in the world, with only the young moon—who has watched millions of such lovers plighting their troth—to witness the little drama of their betrothal.

Morford bent his head and pressed his lips to hers.

“Oh, Peggy, my darling, my beloved,” he murmured.

CHAPTER XXVII

M^{RS.} DALTON communicated the news of Peggy's engagement to Lady Metcalfe in a letter of which the following extract may be given:

"I am sure they will be very happy," she wrote; "it is a real love match, and they are very devoted to each other. But while I feel you may have had much more ambitious hopes for your daughter, I can only tell you there is no man to whom I would rather have given one of my own girls than Frederick Morford. I have known him since he was a boy, and I know what a splendid, courageous, upright, and unselfish man he is. I feel that the only thing necessary to complete Peggy's happiness now is to receive your approval and forgiveness, and I hope and pray that in time you may be able to grant her both."

After what she had learned from Mrs. Gillespie, the news was not really a matter of very great surprise to Lady Metcalfe. She had been expecting to hear something of the kind, and as Peggy had wrought such deliberate havoc of her young life and had shattered her own prospects with such wilful recklessness, the knowledge that she was going to be married came almost as a relief. She would be very poor, of course—the man hadn't a penny beyond that wretched little property with the ridiculous name down in the wilds of Somersetshire! But at least she would

have a home, and anyhow that was better than working for her living, which Peter had declared was Peggy's intention.

But what distressed Lady Metcalfe very much indeed was to think that her daughter's engagement should have taken place under the roof of some one she had never seen, and that another woman should have been the first to kiss and congratulate Peggy in that wonderful and radiant moment of her life. There was no doubt that parents could not inflict drastic punishment upon their children without bringing upon themselves a measure of that punishment. Lady Metcalfe felt a fierce jealousy of this Mrs. Dalton, who wrote with such affection and solicitude of Peggy. She felt as if an interloper had usurped her own rights and privileges. Without consulting Sir John, she sat down and wrote a very loving little letter to Peggy, which made her daughter very happy indeed. She never guessed that the letter was the outcome of violent maternal jealousy.

The wedding took place in London early in the New Year. Lady Metcalfe, Peter, Diana and Beatrice were all present, as well as the Daltons, the Sacheverells and Mrs. Gillespie. Sir John, still obdurate and a little annoyed at his wife's obstinate attitude, declined to see Peggy or to make any provision for her. By this marriage she had, in his opinion, set the seal upon her disobedience and rebellion.

Lady Metcalfe had never been present at a Nuptial Mass before, and she was obliged to admit that it was a most imposing ceremony and

that the music was very beautifully rendered. She felt proud of Peggy, who looked pale but beautiful in her white bridal array. As for Morford—Lady Metcalfe was further obliged to admit that Beatrice had done him scant justice. He was handsome enough to have captured the heart of any impressionable young girl, and that he was deeply in love with Peggy no one could deny who saw him on that important occasion. Lady Metcalfe, though she would hardly acknowledge it even to herself, was very agreeably impressed in Frederick's favor.

When the service was over she was the first to go up to Peggy and put her arms round her neck and kiss her.

"Dear Peggy," she murmured, "I hope you will be very happy."

And Peggy clung to her mother and kissed her just as she had done when she was a little girl. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears.

"I know now that I must have cared for him ever since I first went to the Rest House," whispered Peggy, "and that was when he first began to care for me."

Then it was Peter's turn.

"Pegs, darling—I know you'll be awfully happy, and I hope you'll never regret the things you've had to give up!" he murmured, kissing her. "You always said you wouldn't choose the fleshpots when the time came!"

"Oh, Peter, I'm sure I shan't regret them. I've got such lovely things, you see, in place of them! And now mother's forgiven me I feel very happy."

Before they parted Lady Metcalfe had a few words with her new son-in-law. Peggy was not at all robust, she informed him; it was all the more strange because Diana and Beatrice had such splendid constitutions, but then Peggy had never resembled her sisters in any one way. She admonished him always to take great care of Peggy, to see that she was never over-fatigued, to avoid for her any extremes of heat or cold. Frederick was secretly amused at this manifestation of maternal solicitude, but he readily promised to take all necessary precautions for the safeguarding of Peggy's health.

"Of course I hope her father will relent in time, especially if there are any children," continued Lady Metcalfe in a hurried and rather embarrassed tone, "but in the meantime you must let me do what I can—I only wish it were in my power to do more." She then disclosed her plan of settling the only spare capital she possessed upon her youngest daughter. Owing to the intricate provisions of her marriage settlement, she could not touch any of her own Lampard money, but she had received two inconsiderable legacies from relations and these she now proceeded to hand over to Mrs. Morford. Frederick was touched as well as amused. Viewed by the standards of the Rest House, the income thus derived would constitute wealth and even affluence, and he felt certain of their ability to live upon it in great comfort.

Morford took his bride back to the Rest House that afternoon. The January day was fine and clear, and Lady Denby sent her motor to Cold-

ford to meet the bridal couple and convey them to their home. As they drove along the lanes between the high brown hedges they could see glimpses of the Mendip hills rising softly green against the pale blue of the winter sky.

Father Denis and old Martha were standing in the doorway to welcome them. As they entered the hall Frederick and Peggy Morford knelt down to receive the priest's blessing on this the threshold of their new life.

THE END

STANDARD CATHOLIC BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

BENZIGER BROTHERS

CINCINNATI:
343 MAIN ST.

NEW YORK:
36-38 BARCLAY ST.

CHICAGO:
214-216 W. MONROE ST.

Books not marked *net* will be sent postpaid on receipt of advertised price. Books marked *net* are such where ten per cent must be added for postage. Thus a book advertised as *net*, \$1.00, will be sent postpaid on receipt of \$1.10.

Complete descriptive catalogue sent free on application.

INSTRUCTION, DOCTRINE, APOLOGETICS, CONTROVERSY, DEVOTION, MEDITATION, THEOLOGY, LITURGY, HOLY SCRIPTURE, BIBLE, SERMONS, PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY

ABANDONMENT; or, Absolute Surrender of Self to Divine Providence. CAUSSADE, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 0 50
ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. TESNIÈRE.	<i>net</i> , 0 50
ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATING THE CATHOLIC CATECHISM. SPIRAGO.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
ANGELS OF THE SANCTUARY. For Altar Boys. MUSSER.	<i>net</i> , 0 15
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ST. IGNATIUS. O'CONOR, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 1 25
BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY, THE. A history of conditions of Christian life in the first three centuries of our era. SHAHAN.	<i>net</i> , 2 00
BENEDICENDA; or, Rites and Ceremonies to be Observed in some of the Principal Functions of the Roman Pontifical and Roman Ritual. SCHULTE.	<i>net</i> , 1 50
BIBLE, THE HOLY. Large type, handy size. Cloth, 1.00; finer bindings, 1.50—4.00; India paper edition.	3 00—5 00
BONOMELLI, RT. REV. J. HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES AND GOSPELS. 4 vols.	<i>net</i> , 5 00
—HOMILIES ON THE COMMON OF SAINTS. 2 vols.	<i>net</i> , 2 50
—THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES; or, Discourses for all the Great Feasts except Those of the Blessed Virgin. 4 vols.	<i>net</i> , 5 00
BOOK OF THE PROFESSED. Vols. I, II, III. Each,	<i>net</i> , 0 75
BOY-SAVER'S GUIDE. Society Work for Lads in Their Teens. QUIN, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 1 35
CASES OF CONSCIENCE for English-speaking Countries. SLATER, S.J. 2 vols.	<i>net</i> , 3 50
CATECHISM EXPLAINED. SPIRAGO-CLARKE.	<i>net</i> , 2 50
CATHOLIC BELIEF. FAÀ DI BRUNO. Paper, <i>net</i> , 0.10; Cloth,	<i>net</i> , 0 35
CATHOLIC CEREMONIES. DURAND. III. Paper, 0.20; Cloth,	0 50
CATHOLIC HOME ANNUAL. Calendar, Stories, etc. III.	0 25
CATHOLIC PRACTICE AT CHURCH AND AT HOME. KLAUDER. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
CATHOLIC WORSHIP. BRENNAN. Paper, <i>list price</i> , 0.15; Cloth, <i>list price</i> ,	0 22
CATHOLIC'S READY ANSWER, THE. REV. M. P. HALL, S.J.	<i>net</i> , 2 00
CEREMONIAL FOR ALTAR BOYS. BRITT.	<i>net</i> , 0 35
CHILD PREPARED FOR FIRST COMMUNION, THE. ZULUETA, S.J.	0 05
CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS. A Defense of the Catholic Faith. DEVIVIER-MESSMER.	<i>net</i> , 2 00
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. O'CONNELL.	<i>net</i> , 0 60
CHRISTIAN FATHER, THE. Instructions. CRAMER. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35

CHRISTIAN MOTHER, THE. Instructions. CRAMER. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
CHRIST IN TYPE AND PROPHECY. MAAS. Vols. I and II. Each,	net, 2 00
CHRIST'S TEACHING CONCERNING DIVORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
CLERGYMAN'S HANDBOOK OF LAW. SCANLAN.	net, 1 35
COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS (I-L). By REV. E. S. BERRY.	net, 2 00
COMPENDIUM JURIS CANONICI. SMITH.	net, 2 00
COMPENDIUM JURIS REGULARIUM. BACHOFEN.	net, 2 50
COMPENDIUM SACRAE LITURGIAE. WAPELHORST.	net, 2 50
CONSECRANDA; or, Rites and Ceremonies Observed at the Consecration of Churches, Altars, etc. SCHULTE.	net, 1 50
CONSTITUTION OF THE FRIENDS OF JESUS AND MARY, REV. P. GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R.	0 15
CORRECT THING FOR CATHOLICS, THE. BUGG.	0 50
COUNSELS OF ST. ANGELA TO HER SISTERS IN RELIGION.	net, 0 25
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE SICK-ROOM. KREBS.	0 50
DEVOTIONS TO THE SACRED HEART FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH. HUGUET.	0 25
DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, THE. NOLDIN, S.J.	net, 1 25
DIVINE GRACE. Explains the doctrine of the Church on divine grace. WIRTH.	0 50
DIVINE OFFICE. Explanation of Psalms and Canticles. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
DOGMATIC THEOLOGY, OUTLINES OF. HUNTER. Vols. I, II, III. Each,	net, 1 50
ECCLESIASTICAL DICTIONARY. THEIN.	net, 5 00
EDUCATION OF OUR GIRLS, THE. SHIELDS.	net, 1 00
ENCYCLICAL LETTERS OF POPE LEO XIII.	net, 2 25
EPISTLES AND GOSPELS. Large type.	net, 0 25
EUCCHARISTIC CHRIST, THE. TESNIÈRE.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF BIBLE HISTORY. NASH.	net, 1 60
EXPLANATION OF CATHOLIC MORALS. STAPLETON.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE BALTIMORE CATECHISM. KINKEAD.	net, 1 00
EXPLANATION OF THE COMMANDMENTS. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE CREED. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPELS AND CATHOLIC WORSHIP. LAMBERT. Paper, 0.20; Cloth,	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE MASS. COCHEM.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE MASS. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF THE SALVE REGINA. LIGUORI.	net, 0 75
EXTREME UNCTION. Paper,	0 05
FLOWERS OF THE PASSION. Devout Thoughts.	0 50
FOR FREQUENT COMMUNICANTS.	0 05
FOUR LAST THINGS. Meditations. COCHEM.	net, 0 75
FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. Translated by REV. J. P. M. SCHLEUTER, S.J.	net, 0 60
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. GIGOT.	net, 2 50
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. Abridged. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. VERHEYEN.	net, 0 30
GENTLEMAN, A. Manners and Social Usages. EGAN.	0 50
GIFT OF THE KING, THE. An Explanation of the Mass for Children.	0 60
GLORIES OF MARY, THE. Vols. I and II. LIGUORI. Each,	net, 1 50
GLORIES OF MARY. Popular edition.	0 50
GLORIES OF THE SACRED HEART. HAUSHERR, S.J.	0 50
GOFFINE'S DEVOUT INSTRUCTIONS.	1 00
GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
GREETINGS TO THE CHRIST-CHILD.	0 60

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES. BURNS.	net, 1 75
GUIDE FOR SACRISTANS.	net, 0 85
HANDBOOK OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. WILMERS, S.J.	net, 1 50
HARMONY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. HEUSER.	net, 1 25
HELPS TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE. SCHNEIDER.	0 50
HIDDEN TREASURE; or, The Value and Excellence of Holy Mass. BLESSED LEONARD. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. ALZOG. 3 vols.	net, 8 00
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BUSINGER-BRENNAN. 8vo.	2 00
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BRUECK. 2 vols.	net, 3 00
HISTORY OF ECONOMICS. DEWE.	net, 1 50
HISTORY OF THE MASS. O'BRIEN.	net, 1 25
HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION. COBBETT.	0 50
HOLY EUCHARIST, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
HOLY HOUR, THE. KEILEY.	0 05
HOLY MASS, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
HOLY VIATICUM OF LIFE AS OF DEATH, THE. A provision for the journey of life as well as of death. DEVER. Paper, 0.25; Cloth.	0.60
HOLY WEEK, COMPLETE OFFICE OF. Cheap Edition, flexible cloth, net, 0.20; Cloth,	net, 0 30
HOW TO COMFORT THE SICK. KREBS.	0 50
HOW TO MAKE THE MISSION.	0 10
INCARNATION, BIRTH, AND INFANCY OF CHRIST, LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
INDEX TO LIGUORI'S WORKS.	net, 0 10
IN HEAVEN WE KNOW OUR OWN. For those who have lost dear ones by death. BLot, S.J.	net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. SCHMITT.	net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS ON THE COMMANDMENTS AND SACRAMENTS. LIGUORI. Paper, 0.15; Cloth.	0 35
INSTRUCTIONS ON MARRIAGE, POPULAR. GIRARDEY. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0.35
INTERIOR OF JESUS AND MARY. GROU, S.J. 2 vols.	net, 2 00
JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST. MILLET-BYRNE.	net, 2 00
LADY, A. Manners and Social Usages. BUGG.	0 50
LAWS OF THE KING. Talks on the Commandments for Children.	0 60
LESSONS OF THE SAVIOUR. Christ's Miracles Described for Children.	0 60
LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI. 5 vols. Each.	net, 1 50
LIFE OF BL. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. BOUGAUD.	0 50
LIFE OF POPE PIUS X.	2 00
LIFE OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENNA. AYMÉ.	1 00
LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. ROHNER-BRENNAN.	0 50
LIFE OF CHRIST AND OF HIS BLESSED MOTHER. BUSINGER-BRENNAN. Profusely illustrated.	net, 10 00
LIFE OF CHRIST. COCHEM-HAMMER.	0 50
LIFE OF SISTER ANNE KATHARINE EMMERICH. McGowan.	net, 1 75
LIFE OF ST. TERESA, POPULAR. REV. M. JOSEPH.	0 50
LIFE OF VEN. CRESCENTIA HOSS.	net, 1 25
LIGUORI. COMPLETE WORKS. Vols. I-XXII. Each,	net, 1 50
LITTLE COMMUNICANTS' PRAYER-BOOK. SLOAN.	0 20
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. RITA. McGRATH.	0 50
LITTLE MASS BOOK. LYNCH.	0 05
LIVES OF THE SAINTS. Adapted from ALBAN BUTLER.	0 50
LIVES OF THE SAINTS FOR CHILDREN. BERTHOLD.	0 60
LIVES OF THE SAINTS, PICTORIAL. SHEA. Illustrated.	3 00
LIVES OF THE SAINTS, SHORT. DONNELLY.	0 60
LIVES OF THE SAINTS, LITTLE PICTORIAL. Illustrated.	1 25
LOURDES. Its Inhabitants, Its Pilgrims and Miracles. CLARKE, S.J.	0 50
MANUAL OF CATHOLIC HYMNS. DIERINGER-PIERRON. Edition with melody and words, list price, 0.42; Edition for the organist,	net, 3 00
MANUAL OF HOMILETICS AND CATECHETICS. SCHUECH.	net, 1 25
MANUAL OF MORAL THEOLOGY. SLATER, S.J. Vols. I and II. Each,	net, 2 75

MANUAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY. GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
MARIE COROLLA. FR. EDMUND, C.P.	1 25
MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS. Instructions, Legends, Novenas, and Prayers. HAMMER.	2 00
MARY THE QUEEN. A life of the Blessed Virgin for Children.	0 60
MEANS OF GRACE. Complete Explanation of the Sacraments. Fully illustrated. BRENNAN.	3 00
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. BAXTER.	net, 1 50
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. HAMON. 5 vols.	net, 5 00
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. VERCUYSSSE, S.J. 2 vols.	net, 3 50
MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE MONTH. NEPVEU-RYAN.	0 50
MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS. For Religious.	net, 0 50
MEDITATIONS FOR THE USE OF THE SECULAR CLERGY. 2 vols. CHAIGNON, S.J.	net, 4 50
MEDITATIONS FOR THE USE OF SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS. BRANCHEREAU. 5 vols.	net, 5 00
MEDITATIONS ON THE LAST WORDS FROM THE CROSS. PERRAUD.	net, 0 50
MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE, THE TEACHING, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. ILG. 2 vols.	net, 3 50
MEDITATIONS ON THE MYSTERIES OF OUR HOLY FAITH. According to the Plan of Ven. L. de Ponte, S.J. By REV. C. W. BARRAUD, S.J. 2 vols.	net, 3 00
MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION. By a Passionist.	0 50
MEDITATIONS ON THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS CHRIST. PERINALDO.	net, 0 75
MESSAGE OF MOSES AND MODERN HIGHER CRITICISM. GIGOT.	net, 0 15
MIDDLE AGES, THE. Sketches covering the period from the fifth to the fifteenth century. SHAHAN.	net, 2 00
MIRACLES OF OUR LORD. RELIGIOUS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.	0 60
MISCELLANY. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
MISSAL EXPLAINED, THE.	net, 1 65
MISSAL FOR THE LAITY.	net, 1 85
MISSAL, THE NEW. In English. For Every Day in the Year. According to the Latest Decrees. With Introduction, Notes, and a Book of Prayer. By REV. F. X. LASANCE, author of "My Prayer-Book." Cloth,	1 50
MOMENTS BEFORE THE TABERNACLE. Prayers and Aspirations. RUSSELL, S.J.	net, 0 50
MONTH, LITTLE, OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.	0 35
MONTH OF MAY, LITTLE.	0 35
MONTH, NEW, OF THE HOLY ANGELS. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.	net, 0 35
MORAL PRINCIPLES AND MEDICAL PRACTICE. COPPENS, S.J.	net, 1 00
MORE SHORT SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN. MADAME CECILIA.	0 50
MY FIRST COMMUNION. The Happiest Day of My Life. BUCHMANN-BRENNAN.	net, 0 75
NARROW WAY, THE. REV. P. GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R.	0 60
NEW TESTAMENT. 32mo, flexible cloth.	net, 0 18
NEW TESTAMENT. (India Paper.) Leather, gold edges.	net, 0 75—1 60
NEW TESTAMENT. 12mo. Large, new type.	0 50
NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES. CONATY. List price,	0 54
OUTLINES OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
OUTLINES OF SERMONS FOR YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN. SCHUEN.	net, 2 00
PARADISE ON EARTH; or, A Religious Vocation the Surest Way in Life. NATALE, S.J.	net, 0 50
PARISH PRIEST ON DUTY, THE. HEUSER.	net, 0 60
PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PASTORAL LETTERS, ADDRESSES, AND OTHER WRITINGS OF THE RT. REV. JAMES A. McFAUL, D.D., Bishop of Trenton. 8vo.	net, 1 50
PASTORAL THEOLOGY. STANG.	net, 1 50

PATRON SAINTS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH. Illustrated.	
Vols. I, II, III. MANNIX. Each.	0 60
PEARLS FROM FABER. Selections from His Works. BRUNOWE.	0 35
POLITICAL AND MORAL ESSAYS. RICKABY, S.J.	net, 1 75
PRAXIS SYNODALIS.	net, 0 75
PREACHING. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PREPARATION FOR DEATH. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PRINCIPLES, ORIGIN, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE U. S. BURNS.	net, 1 75
PRIVATE RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS. GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R.	net, 1 50
PULPIT SKETCHES. Outlines of Sermons. LAMBERT.	net, 1 25
QUESTIONS OF MORAL THEOLOGY. REV. THOMAS SLATER, S.J.	net, 2 00
RAMBLES IN CATHOLIC LANDS. REV. MICHAEL BARRETT, O.S.B.	net, 2 00
REASONABLENESS OF CATHOLIC CEREMONIES AND PRACTICES. BURKE. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
RELIGIOUS STATE, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 0 50
RETREATS FOR SISTERS, TWO. WIRTH.	net, 1 00
RITUALE COMPENDIOSUM. Sacristy Ritual.	net, 0 90
ROMA. Ancient, Subterranean, and Modern Rome in Word and Picture. By REV. ALBERT KUHN, O.S.B., D.D. Preface by CARDINAL GIBBONS. 18 bi-monthly parts, each 0.35 postpaid. Subscription by the year, 6 parts, 2.00; complete work, 6.00. 938 text illustrations, 40 full-page illustrations, 3 plans of Rome in colors. The best and most thorough production of its kind.	
ROMAN CURIA AS IT NOW EXISTS. MARTIN, S.J.	net, 1 50
ROSARY, THE CROWN OF MARY, THE.	0 10
RULES OF LIFE FOR THE PASTOR OF SOULS. SLATER- RAUCH.	net, 0 75
SACRAMENTALS. The Sacramentals of the Church Explained. LAMBING. Paper, 0.20; Cloth,	0 50
SACRED HEART STUDIED IN THE SACRED SCRIP- TURES, THE. SAINTRAIN, C.S.S.R.	0 50
SACRIFICE OF THE MASS WORTHILY CELEBRATED. CHAIGNON, S.J.	net, 1 50
SAINTS AND PLACES. Ayscough. Description of Italy's most historic spots. 22 full-page illustrations.	net, 1 50
ST. ANTHONY. ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES. KELLER.	net, 0 75
ST. ANTHONY, THE SAINT OF THE WHOLE WORLD. WARD.	0 50
SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI: SOCIAL REFORMER. DUBOIS.	0 50
SCAPULAR MEDAL, THE. REV. P. GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R.	0 05
SECRET OF SANCTITY. CRASSET.	0 50
SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. HENRY. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN OF MARY. CALLERIO.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN'S MASSES. FRASSINETTI.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR SUNDAYS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR THE SUNDAYS AND CHIEF FESTIVALS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR. 2 vols. POTTGEISSER.	net, 3 00
SERMONS FROM THE LATINS. BAXTER.	net, 2 00
SERMONS, FUNERAL. WIRTH. Vols. I and II. Each,	net, 1 00
SERMONS, NEW AND OLD. WIRTH. 8 vols. Each,	net, 2 00
SERMONS ON THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. SCHEURER- LASANCE.	net, 1 50
SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM, POPULAR. BAMBERG- THURSTON, S.J. 3 vols. Each,	net, 1 50
SERMONS ON THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART, Six. BIERBAUM.	net, 0 75
SERMONS, SHORT, FOR LOW MASSES. SCHOUFFE.	net, 1 25
SERMONS, SHORT. HUNOLT. 5 vols. (WIRTH.) Each,	net, 2 00
SHORT CONFERENCES ON THE SACRED HEART. BRINK- MEYER.	0 50
SHORT COURSE IN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE. For Non- Catholics Intending Marriage with Catholics.	0 10
SHORT HISTORY OF MORAL THEOLOGY. SLATER, S.J.	net, 0 50
SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. LASAUSSE.	0 50

SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY. STANG.	net, 1 00
SOCIALISM: ITS THEORETICAL BASIS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION. CATHREIN, S.J.	net, 1 50
SOCIALISM, MORALITY OF MODERN. MING, S.J.	net, 1 50
SOCIALISM, CHARACTERISTICS AND RELIGION OF. MING, S.J.	net, 1 50
SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Part I. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Part II. GIGOT.	net, 2 00
SPIRAGO'S METHOD OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. MESSMER.	net, 1 50
SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS. BUCKLER, O.P.	C 50
SPIRITUAL DESPONDENCY AND TEMPTATIONS. MICHEL, S.J.	net, 1 25
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR A TEN DAYS' RETREAT. SMETANA, C.S.S.R.	net, 0 75
SPIRITUAL PEPPER AND SALT. STANG. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE AND THE LIFE OF SACRIFICE IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE. GIRAUD-THURSTON.	net, 2 00
SPOILING THE DIVINE FEAST. ZULUETA.	0 05
STORIES FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. KELLER.	net, 0 50
STORY OF THE DIVINE CHILD. LINGS.	0 60
SUNDAY-SCHOOL DIRECTOR'S GUIDE. SLOAN.	net, 0 50
SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE. SLOAN.	0 50
SURE WAY TO A HAPPY MARRIAGE. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
TALKS WITH THE LITTLE ONES ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED.	0 60
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE CONFESSIONAL. SCHIELER-HEUSER.	net, 3 50
THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR. BERGAMO.	net, 2 00
THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. LASANCE.	net, 1 50
TRAINING OF CHILDREN. MADAME CECILIA. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
TRUE POLITENESS, LETTERS ON. DEMORE.	net, 0 75
TRUE SPOUSE OF CHRIST. LIGUORI.	0 50
TRUE SPOUSE OF CHRIST. Vols. I and II. LIGUORI. Each,	net, 1 50
VENERATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. ROHNER-BRENNAN.	0 50
VICTORIES OF THE MARTYRS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
VIGIL HOUR. RYAN, S.J.	0 05
VISIT TO EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND. FAIRBANKS.	1 50
VOCATION. VAN TRICHT-CONNIFF. Paper,	0 05
VOCATIONS EXPLAINED.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Paper,	0 05
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Eucharistic Method.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method of St. FRANCIS ASSISI.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method of JESUIT FATHER.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method of St. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.	0 10
WAY OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION. Meditations. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
WAY OF INTERIOR PEACE. DE LEHEN.	net, 1 50
WHAT CATHOLICS HAVE DONE FOR SCIENCE. BRENNAN.	net, 1 25
WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES. DRURY. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
WITH CHRIST, MY FRIEND. SLOAN.	net, 0 75

NOVELS, POETRY, ETC.

AGATHA'S HARD SAYING. ROSA MULHOLLAND.	0 50
BACK TO THE WORLD. CHAMPOL.	net, 1 35
BALLADS OF CHILDHOOD. By REV. MICHAEL EARLS, S.J.	net, 1 00
BLACK BROTHERHOOD, THE. GARROLD, S.J.	net, 1 35
BOND AND FREE. CONNOR.	0 50
"BUT THY LOVE AND THY GRACE." FINN, S.J.	1 00
BY THE BLUE RIVER. ISABEL C. CLARKE.	net, 1 35

CARROLL DARE. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
CATHOLIC HOME ANNUAL.	0 25
CIRCUS RIDER'S DAUGHTER. BRACKEL.	0 50
CONNOR D'ARCY'S STRUGGLES. BERTHOLDS.	0 50
CORINNE'S VOW. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
DAUGHTER OF KINGS, A. HINKSON.	1 25
DION AND THE SIBYLS. M. KEON.	0 50
DOUBLE KNOT, A, AND OTHER STORIES.	0 60
ELDER MISS AINSBOROUGH. MARION A. TAGGART.	1 25
FABIOLA. WISEMAN. Illustrated.	0 50
FABIOLA'S SISTERS. CLARKE.	0 50
FATAL BEACON. BRACKEL.	1 25
FAUSTULA. AYSCOUGH.	net, 1 35
FINE CLAY. ISABEL C. CLARKE.	net, 1 35
FLOWERS OF THE CLOISTER. Poems. SISTER LA MOTTE.	1 25
FORGIVE AND FORGET. LINGEN.	0 50
FRIENDLY LITTLE HOUSE, THE, AND OTHER STORIES.	0 50
TAGGART.	0 50
HEARTS OF GOLD. EDHOR.	1 25
HEART OF A MAN, THE. MAHER.	net, 1 35
HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN, THE. HAHN-HAHN.	0 50
HER BLIND FOLLY. HOLT.	1 25
HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER. HINKSON.	1 25
HER FATHER'S SHARE. EDITH POWER.	net, 1 25
HER JOURNEY'S END. COOKE.	0 50
IDOLS. NAVERY.	0 50
IN GOD'S GOOD TIME. ROSS.	0 50
IN THE DAYS OF KING HAL. TAGGART.	1 25
IVY HEDGE, THE. MAURICE F. EGAN.	net, 1 35
"KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS." HARRISON.	1 25
LADY OF THE TOWER, THE, AND OTHER STORIES.	0 50
LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE, THE. HARTE.	0 50
"LIKE UNTO A MERCHANT." MARY A. GRAY.	net, 1 35
LITTLE CARDINAL, THE. PARR.	1 25
LINKED LIVES. DOUGLAS.	1 50
MARCELLA GRACE. ROSA MULHOLLAND.	0 50
MARIE OF THE HOUSE D'ANTERS. EARLS.	net, 1 35
MELCHIOR OF BOSTON. EARLS.	1 00
MIGHTY FRIEND, THE. L'ERMITE.	net, 1 50
MIRROR OF SHALOTT, THE. BENSON.	1 50
MISS ERIN. FRANCIS.	0 50
MONK'S PARDON, THE. NAVERY.	0 50
MR. BILLY BUTTONS. LECKY.	1 25
MY LADY BEATRICE. COOKE.	0 50
NOT A JUDGMENT. KEON.	1 25
ONLY ANNE. ISABEL C. CLARKE.	net, 1 35
OTHER MISS LISLE, THE. MARTIN.	0 50
OUT OF BONDAGE. HOLT.	1 25
OUTLAW OF CAMARGUE, THE. DE LAMOTHE.	0 50
PASSING SHADOWS. YORKE.	1 25
"PAT." HINKSON.	net, 1 35
PERE MONNIER'S WARD. LECKY.	1 25
PILKINGTON HEIR, THE. SADLIER.	1 25
PRISONERS' YEARS. CLARKE.	net, 1 35
PRODIGAL'S DAUGHTER, THE, AND OTHER STORIES.	1 00
BUGG.	1 25
PROPHET'S WIFE, THE. By ANNA C. BROWNE.	1 25
RED INN AT ST. LYPHAR, THE. SADLIER.	1 25
ROAD BEYOND THE TOWN, THE, AND OTHER POEMS.	1 25
EARLS.	0 50
ROSE OF THE WORLD. MARTIN.	0 50
ROUND TABLE OF AMERICAN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS.	0 50
ROUND TABLE OF IRISH AND ENGLISH CATHOLIC NOVELISTS.	0 50
ROUND TABLE OF GERMAN CATHOLIC NOVELISTS.	0 50
ROUND TABLE OF FRENCH CATHOLIC NOVELISTS.	0 50

ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. I.	} A series of interesting articles on a great variety of subjects of much educational value. Profusely illustrated.	1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. II.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. III.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. IV.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. V.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VI.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VII.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VIII.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. IX.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. X.		1 00
RULER OF THE KINGDOM, THE. KEON.		1 25
SECRET CITADEL, THE. ISABEL C. CLARKE.	net,	1 35
SECRET OF THE GREEN VASE, THE. COOKE.		0 50
SENIOR LIEUTENANT'S WAGER, THE, AND OTHER STORIES.		0 60
SHADOW OF EVERSLEIGH, THE. LANSDOWNE.		0 50
SHIELD OF SILENCE. M. E. HENRY-RUFFIN.	net,	1 35
SO AS BY FIRE. CONNOR.		0 50
SOGGARTH AROON. GUINAN.		1 25
SON OF SIRO, THE. COPUS.	net,	1 35
STORY OF CECILIA, THE. HINKSON.		1 25
STUORE. EARLS.		1 00
TEMPEST OF THE HEART, THE. GRAY.		0 50
TEST OF COURAGE, THE. ROSS.		0 50
THAT MAN'S DAUGHTER. ROSS.		1 25
THEIR CHOICE. SKINNER.		0 50
THROUGH THE DESERT. SIENKIEWICZ.	net,	1 35
TRAIL OF THE DRAGON, THE, AND OTHER STORIES.		0 50
TRAINING OF SILAS. DEVINE, S.J.		1 25
TRUE STORY OF MASTER GERARD, THE. SADLIER.		1 25
TURN OF THE TIDE, THE. GRAY.		0 50
UNBIDDEN GUEST, THE. COOKE.		0 50
UNRAVELING OF A TANGLE, THE. TAGGART.		1 25
UP IN ARDMUIRLAND. BARRETT.	net,	1 25
VOCATION OF EDWARD CONWAY, THE. EGAN.		1 25
WARGRAVE TRUST, THE. REID.		1 25
WAY THAT LED BEYOND, THE. HARRISON.		1 25
WEDDING BELLS OF GENDALOUGH, THE. EARLS.	net,	1 35
WHEN LOVE IS STRONG. KEON.		1 25
WOMAN OF FORTUNE. CHRISTIAN REID.		1 25

JUVENILES

ALTHEA. NIRDLINGER.	0 50
ADVENTURE WITH THE APACHES, AN. FERRY.	0 35
AS GOLD IN THE FURNACE. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
AS TRUE AS GOLD. MANNIX.	0 35
BELL FOUNDRY, THE. SCHACHING.	0 35
BERKLEYS, THE. WIGHT.	0 35
BEST FOOT FORWARD, THE. FINN, S.J.	0 85
BETWEEN FRIENDS. AUMERLE.	0 50
BISTOURI. MELANDRI.	0 35
BLISSYLVANIA POST-OFFICE, THE. TAGGART.	0 35
BOB O'LINK. WAGGERMAN.	0 35
BROWNIE AND I. AUMERLE.	0 50
BUNT AND BILL. C. MULHOLLAND.	0 35
BY BRANSCOME RIVER. TAGGART.	0 35
CAMP BY COPPER RIVER, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
CAPTAIN TED. WAGGAMAN.	0 50
CAVE BY THE BEECH FORK, THE. SPALDING.	0 85
CHARLIE CHITTYWICK. BEARNE.	0 85
CHILDREN OF CUPA. MANNIX.	0 35
CHILDREN OF THE LOG CABIN. DELAMARE.	0 50
CLARE LORRAINE. "LEE."	0 50
CLAUDE LIGHTFOOT. FINN, S.J.	0 85
COLLEGE BOY, A. YORKE.	0 85
CUPA REVISITED. MANNIX.	0 35
DADDY DAN. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
DEAR FRIENDS. NIRDLINGER.	0 60
DIMPLING'S SUCCESS. C. MULHOLLAND.	0 35

ETHELRED PRESTON. FINN, S.J.	0 85
EVERY-DAY GIRL, AN. CROWLEY.	0 35
FAIRY OF THE SNOWS, THE. FINN, S.J.	0 85
FIVE BIRDS IN A NEST. DELAMARE.	0 50
FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES.	0 50
FLOWER OF THE FLOCK. EGAN.	0 85
FOR THE WHITE ROSE. HINKSON.	0 35
FREDDY CARR'S ADVENTURES. GARROLD, S.J.	0 50
FREDDY CARR AND HIS FRIENDS. GARROLD, S.J.	0 50
FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER. S. T. SMITH.	0 35
GOLDEN LILY, THE. HINKSON.	0 35
GREAT CAPTAIN, THE. HINKSON.	0 35
GUILD BOYS' PLAY AT RIDINGDALE. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
HALDEMAN CHILDREN, THE. MANNIX.	0 35
HARMONY FLATS. WHITMIRE.	0 50
HARRY DEE. FINN, S.J.	0 85
HARRY RUSSELL. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
HEIR OF DREAMS, AN. O'MALLEY.	0 35
HIS FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE. FINN, S.J.	1 00
HOSTAGE OF WAR. BONESTEEL.	0 35
HOW THEY WORKED THEIR WAY. EGAN.	0 50
IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN CHEST. BARTON.	0 50
IN QUEST OF ADVENTURE. MANNIX.	0 35
"JACK."	0 35
JACK HILDRETH ON THE NILE. TAGGART.	0 50
JACK O'LANTERN. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
JUNIORS OF ST. BEDE'S. BRYSON.	0 50
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. First Series.	1 00
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. Second Series.	1 00
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. Third Series.	1 00
KLONDIKE PICNIC, A. DONNELLY.	0 50
LEGENDS AND STORIES OF THE CHILD JESUS FROM MANY LANDS. LUTZ.	0 75
LITTLE APOSTLE ON CRUTCHES, THE. DELAMARE.	0 35
LITTLE LADY OF THE HALL. NORA RYEMAN.	0 35
LITTLE GIRL FROM BACK EAST, THE. ROBERTS.	0 35
LITTLE MARSHALLS AT THE LAKE. NIXON-ROULET.	0 50
LITTLE MISSY. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
LOYAL BLUE AND ROYAL SCARLET. TAGGART.	0 85
MADCAP SET AT ST. ANNE'S, THE. BRUNOWE.	0 35
MAD KNIGHT, THE. O. v. SCHACHING.	0 35
MAKING OF MORTLAKE, THE. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
MARKS OF THE BEAR CLAWS, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
MARY TRACY'S FORTUNE. SADLIER.	0 35
MELOR OF THE SILVER HAND. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
MILLY AVELING. S. T. SMITH.	0 50
MIRALDA. K. M. JOHNSTON.	0 35
MORE FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES.	0 75
MOSTLY BOYS. FINN, S.J.	0 85
MYSTERIOUS DOORWAY, THE. SADLIER.	0 35
MYSTERY OF CLEVERLY, THE. BARTON.	0 50
MYSTERY OF HORNBY HALL, THE. SADLIER.	0 50
NAN NOBODY. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
NED RIEDER. WEHS.	0 50
NEW BOYS AT RIDINGDALE, THE. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
NEW SCHOLAR AT ST. ANNE'S, THE. BRUNOWE.	0 50
OLD CHARLMONT'S SEED BED. S. T. SMITH.	0 35
OLD MILL ON THE WITHROSE. SPALDING, S. J.	0 85
ON THE OLD CAMPING GROUND. MANNIX.	0 85
OUR LADY'S LUTENIST. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
PANCHO AND PANCHITA. MANNIX.	0 35
PAULINE ARCHER. SADLIER.	0 35
PERCY WYNN. FINN, S.J.	0 85
PERIL OF DIONYSIO. MANNIX.	0 35
PETRONILLA, AND OTHER STORIES. DONNELLY.	0 50
PICKLE AND PEPPER. DORSEY.	0 85
PILGRIM FROM IRELAND, A. CARNOT.	0 35
PLAYWATER PLOT. WAGGAMAN.	0 50
POLLY DAY'S ISLAND. ROBERTS.	0 50
POVERINA. BUCKENHAM.	0 50
QUEEN'S PAGE, THE. HINKSON.	0 35

QUEEN'S PROMISE, THE. WAGGAMAN.	0 50
RACE FOR COPPER ISLAND, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
RECRUIT TOMMY COLLINS. BONESTEEL.	0 35
RIDINGDALE FLOWER SHOW. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
ROMANCE OF THE SILVER SHOON. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
SANDY JOE. WAGGAMAN.	0 85
SEA-GULL'S ROCK, THE. SANDEAU.	0 35
SEVEN LITTLE MARSHALLS, THE. NIXON-ROULET.	0 35
SHADOWS LIFTED. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
SHEER PLUCK. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
SHERIFF OF THE BEECH FORK, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
SHIPMATES. WAGGAMAN.	0 50
ST. CUTHBERT'S. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
STRONG-ARM OF AVALON. WAGGAMAN.	0 85
SUGAR-CAMP AND AFTER, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
SUMMER AT WOODVILLE, A. SADLIER.	0 35
TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. CAPELLA	0 75
TALISMAN, THE. SADLIER.	0 50
TAMING OF POLLY, THE. DORSEY.	0 85
THAT FOOTBALL GAME. FINN, S.J.	0 85
THAT OFFICE BOY. FINN, S.J.	0 85
THREE GIRLS AND ESPECIALLY ONE. TAGGART.	0 35
TOLD IN THE TWILIGHT. MOTHER SALOME.	0 50
TOM LOSELY: BOY. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
TOM'S LUCK-POT. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
TOM PLAYFAIR. FINN, S.J.	0 85
TOORALLADDY. WALSH.	0 35
TRANSPLANTING OF TESSIE, THE. WAGGAMAN.	0 50
TREASURE OF NUGGET MOUNTAIN, THE. TAGGART.	0 50
TWO LITTLE GIRLS. MACK.	0 35
UPS AND DOWNS OF MARJORIE. WAGGAMAN.	0 35
VIOLIN MAKER OF MITTENWALD, THE. SCHACHING.	0 35
WAYWARD WINIFRED. SADLIER.	0 85
WINNETOU, THE APACHE KNIGHT. TAGGART.	0 50
WITCH OF RIDINGDALE, THE. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
YOUNG COLOR GUARD, THE. BONESTEEL.	0 35

BENZIGER'S STANDARD FIFTY-CENT LIBRARY FOR EVERY BODY

Novels, Juveniles and Religious Books by the best Catholic Authors. Copyright books. Substantially and attractively bound in cloth. Complete list of books in library sent on application. Each volume, \$0.50.

BENZIGER'S THIRTY-FIVE-CENT JUVENILE LIBRARY

Books for young folks by the best authors. Copyright books. They are printed on good paper in large and readable type, and are neatly bound in cloth. Each book has an illustrated jacket. Complete list on request. Each volume, \$0.35.

CATHOLIC LIBRARIES

Books of Religious Instruction, Novels, and Juveniles, put up in libraries of 10 volumes, at \$5.00. Payable on the Easy Payment Plan of \$1.00 a month. List of libraries sent on application.

SCHOOL-BOOKS

Catechisms, Readers (The Catholic National Readers, The New Century Readers), Charts, Spellers, Grammars, Bible History, United States Histories, Benziger's Advanced Geography, Benziger's Elementary Geography, Graded Arithmetics, Three-Book Series of Arithmetics, Hymnbooks, etc., etc. Complete list sent on application.

PRAYER-BOOKS

Complete illustrated catalogue will be sent on application.

Sizes of books in inches: 48mo, about $3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$; large 48mo, about $4 \times 2\frac{3}{4}$; small 32mo, about $4\frac{1}{8} \times 3$; 32mo, about $4\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$; oblong 32mo, about $5\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$; 24mo, about $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; oblong 24mo, about $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$; 16mo, about $6\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$; small 12mo, 7×5 .

FATHER LASANCE'S PRAYER-BOOKS

	<i>Imitation Leather, Red Edges.</i>	<i>Leather, Gilt Edges.</i>
MISSAL, THE NEW. In English. For Every Day in the Year. With Introduction, Notes, and a Book of Prayer.	1 50	2 00—5 00
MY PRAYER-BOOK: HAPPINESS IN GOODNESS. Reflections, Counsels, Prayers and Devotions. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 50
MY PRAYER-BOOK. India Paper edition. 16mo.		2 00—4 25
MY PRAYER-BOOK. India Paper edition. With Epistles and Gospels. 16mo.		2 25—2 75
BLESSED SACRAMENT BOOK. Offers a larger and greater variety of prayers than any other book in English. Large 16mo.	1 50	2 00—4 50
WITH GOD. A Book of Prayers and Reflections. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—5 00
THE YOUNG MAN'S GUIDE. For manly boys and young men. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25—2 50
THE CATHOLIC GIRL'S GUIDE. Counsels for Girls in the Ordinary Walks of Life and in Particular for the Children of Mary. Oblong 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 50
PRAYER-BOOK FOR RELIGIOUS. A complete manual of prayers for members of all religious communities. Small 12mo.	<i>net,</i> 1 50	2 50—3 50
THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. Reflections on the General Principles of the Religious Life, on Perfect Charity. Small 12mo.	<i>net,</i> 1 50	2 50
VISITS TO JESUS IN THE TABERNACLE. Hours and Half-Hours of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 75
MANUAL OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST. Conferences on the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic Devotions. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
SHORT VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. Oblong 32mo. Cloth.	0 15	
MASS DEVOTIONS AND READINGS ON THE MASS. Twelve methods of hearing Mass. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
THE SACRED HEART BOOK. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY. Oblong 32mo. Cloth.	0 15	

PRAYER-BOOKS FOR GENERAL USE

	<i>Cloth.</i>	<i>Leather, Gilt Edges.</i>
ALL FOR JESUS. With Epistles and Gospels. Small 32mo.	0 30	0 60—1 90
BREAD OF LIFE, THE. A Complete Communion Book for Catholics. By REV. F. WILLAM. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
COME, LET US ADORE. A Eucharistic Manual. By REV. B. HAMMER, O.F.M. Small 32mo.	0 75	1 25
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI. A Complete Manual of Pious Exercises for Every Day, Every Week, and Every Month. Ward. 16mo.	1 25	1 75
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE SICK-ROOM. A Book for Every Catholic Family. By REV. J. A. KREBS, C.S.S.R. 12mo.	0 50	
DOMINICAN MISSION BOOK. By a Dominican Father. 16mo.	0 75	1 50

	<i>Cloth.</i>	<i>Leather, Gilt Edges.</i>
FLOWERS OF PIETY. Approved prayers for Catholics. 48mo.	0 25	0 50—3 25
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, THE. By THOMAS A. KEMPIS. With Reflections, etc. 32mo.	0 35	0 65
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, THE. By THOMAS A. KEMPIS. Illustrated. India Paper. Edition de Luxe. 32mo.		1 25—3 30
GARLAND OF PRAYER, THE. A dainty prayer-book. Contains Nuptial Mass. 32mo.		2 25—3 25
GOLDEN KEY TO HEAVEN. With Epistles and Gospels. Small 32mo.	0 35	0 70—1 10
HELP FOR THE POOR SOULS IN PURGATORY. By Jos. ACKERMANN. Small 32mo.	0 60	
HOLY HOUR OF ADORATION, THE. By RIGHT REV. W. STANG, D.D. Oblong 24mo.	0 60	
IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. By REV. FR. ARNOUDT, S.J. 16mo. <i>net</i> ,	1 25	1 75
INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE. By ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. Small 32mo.	0 50	
KEY OF HEAVEN, THE. With Epistles and Gospels. 48mo.	0 25	0 60—1 50
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. RITA. Prayers and Devotions. With the Story of Her Life. By REV. THOMAS S. McGRATH.	0 50	0 75
LITTLE MASS BOOK. By RIGHT REV. MGR. J. S. M. LYNCH. Paper. 32mo.	0 10	
MANUAL OF THE HOLY NAME. 24mo.	0 50	1 10
MANUAL OF THE SACRED HEART, NEW. Oblong 24mo.	0 25	0 75—1 25
MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY, NEW. 32mo.	0 50	
MANUAL OF ST. JOSEPH, LITTLE. By RIGHT REV. MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 32mo.	0 15	
MISSION-BOOK FOR THE MARRIED. By REV. F. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION-BOOK FOR THE SINGLE. By REV. F. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION-BOOK OF THE REDEMPTORIST FATHERS, THE. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION REMEMBRANCE OF THE REDEMPTORIST FATHERS. By REV. P. GEIERMANN. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
OFFICE OF HOLY WEEK, THE, COMPLETE. 16mo. Flexible Cloth, <i>net</i> , 0.20; Cloth, <i>net</i> ,	0 30	0 70
OUR FAVORITE DEVOTIONS. By RIGHT REV. MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
OUR FAVORITE NOVENAS. By RIGHT REV. MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
POCKET COMPANION. Approved Prayers. Oblong 48mo.	0 10	
SERAPHIC GUIDE, THE. 24mo.	0 60	0 75
VEST-POCKET GEMS OF DEVOTION. Ob. 32mo.	0 15	0 45—0 90
VEST-POCKET GEMS OF DEVOTION. India Paper Edition. With Epistles and Gospels. Oblong 32mo.	0 45	0 65—1 25
VISITS TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT AND TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. By ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI. 32mo.	0 35	0 75

PRAYER-BOOKS WITH LARGE TYPE

KEY OF HEAVEN. With Epistles and Gospels. 24mo.	0 50	0 90—1 70
POCKET MANUAL. Epistles and Gospels. Ob. 32mo.	0 25	0 50—1 35
WAY TO HEAVEN. With Epistles and Gospels.	0 35	0 75

PRAYER-BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND FIRST COMMUNICANTS

BREAD OF ANGELS. Instructions and Prayers Especially Suited for First Communicants. By REV. B. HAMMER, O.F.M. Large 48mo.	0 25	0 65—0 95
CHILD OF MARY, THE. Especially for the Use of First Communicants. 32mo.	0 45	0 95

	Cloth.	Leather, Gilt Edges.
CHILD'S PRAYER-BOOK, THE. 48mo.	0 15	0 50
DEVOUT CHILD, THE. With 18 full-page illustrations of the Mass. 48mo.	0 12	
LITTLE ALTAR BOY'S MANUAL. Instructions for Serving at Mass, Vespers, etc. With prayers.	0 20	0 60
LITTLE COMMUNICANTS' PRAYER-BOOK. By Rev. P. J. Sloan. 32mo. Imitation Cloth, 0 15.	0 20	
PIOUS CHILD, THE. With 18 full-page illustrations of the Mass. 48mo.	0 12	
SODALIST'S VADE MECUM, THE. Prayer-Book and Hymnal for the Children of Mary. 32mo	0 40	0 65

BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

THE POPULAR CATHOLIC FAMILY MONTHLY

The best stories and articles—1,000 illustrations a year. Recommended by 70 Archbishops and Bishops of the United States. Subscription, \$2.50 a year. Three years, \$5.

WHAT BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE GIVES ITS READERS IN A YEAR: Several complete Novels. Fifty to sixty complete stories by the best writers. One thousand illustrations. Twelve double-page reproductions of celebrated paintings. Articles on travel and adventure; on the manners, customs, and home life of peoples; on the haunts and habits of animals. Articles on our country, historic events, times, places; important industries. Fashions, fads and fancies, gathered at home and abroad; helpful hints for home workers, household column, cooking recipes, etc. Current events. "Question Box." Science Notes, etc.

Read the heroic stories of the saintly men and women of our own times

THE HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

SAINTLY MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR TIMES

By REV. CONSTANTINE KEMPF, S.J. From the German by REV. FRANCIS BREYMANN, S.J. 412 pages, 8vo, size 5¼ x 8 inches, net \$1.75, postage 15 cents extra.

Holy Bishops—Holy Secular Priests—Holy Religious—Holy Laymen and Women—The Martyrs.

COMBINATION OFFER: "The Holiness of the Church in the Nineteenth Century" and a year's subscription to "Benziger's Magazine," \$3.25 instead of \$4.25.

THE CATHOLIC'S READY ANSWER

A Popular Vindication of Christian Beliefs and Practices Against the Attack of Modern Criticism. By REV. M. P. HILL, S.J. 490 pages, 8vo, size 5¼ x 8¼ inches, net, \$2 (postage 15 cents extra).

Among the up-to-date questions treated are: Luther, Mixed Marriages, Divorce, Workmen's Conditions, Labor Unions, Strikes, Socialism, Eugenics, Cremation, Evolution, Science and the Bible, Free Thought, Free Love, The Higher Criticism, Apes and Men, Eve and the Serpent, Celibacy of Priests, etc., etc.

COMBINATION OFFER: "The Catholic's Ready Answer" and a year's subscription to "Benziger's Magazine" for \$3.50 instead of \$4.50

©m

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 125 353 3

